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**Evaluating the Visitor Experience:
The Case of Chester Cathedral**

Thomas M. Williams

**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the
University of Chester for the degree of Master of Arts in Management**

**Chester Business School
October 2007**

Declaration

This work is original and has not been submitted previously for any academic purpose.
All secondary sources are acknowledged.

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Abstract

Name:- Thomas M. Williams

Dissertation Title:- Evaluating the Visitor Experience: The case of Chester Cathedral.

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Abstract:-

Chester Cathedral has been a place of worship for 1100 years, although in comparative terms as a heritage visitor attraction it is not so established. Nonetheless it remains a focal point to the city no matter the purpose of visit. This enquiry focuses on the commercial aspects of the Cathedral and in particular the visitor experience. The purpose of the study was to evaluate the visitor experience so that the Chester Cathedral could further develop as a successful heritage attraction. In addition the author endeavoured to add to the contemporary academic debate by interpreting the empirical evidence in a primarily post-modern perspective.

The scope of the research problem was refined by explicitly investigating a number of key research questions. These questions allowed the author to engage in a number of contemporary debates embedded around the heritage/ history battleground, further more the application of post-modern thought was a tool in understanding the social reality. The mixed methodology adopted reflected the complex environment in which the case-study operates, an initial exploratory qualitative phase (primary methodology) was adopted to familiarise the author with the social reality in order to improve validity in the form of semi-structured interviews with various stakeholders. This was then followed by a quantitative visitor questionnaire (secondary methodology), using findings from the interviews as a design structure. Whilst this approach had obvious paradigm implications it was deemed essential in providing well balanced empirical evidence for the post-modern interpretation; multiple-ways to perceive multiple-realities.

The evaluation of the visitor experience identified that there were a number of key synergies required to ensure further development of Chester Cathedral as a heritage attraction, with the interpretation raising some interesting discussions regarding postmodernism and the contemporary debate.

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Chapter 1 **Introduction**

1.1 Background/ Context

The heritage, culture and history of Chester Cathedral dates back many centuries and has the potential to be the main attraction within the city. According to the Cathedral organisation there is much potential for it to further develop as a heritage visitor attraction. Similarly both the North West Development Agency (¹NWDA) and Visit Chester and Cheshire (²VCC) have identified its potential and as a result commissioned a piece of research to contribute towards a tourism strategy.

That separate research project was run parallel to this enquiry and involved collaboration between Chester Cathedral, North West Development Agency, Visit Chester and Cheshire and the author (which can be defined as the ‘Steering Group’). This collaborative project will be referred to as the ‘Cathedral Project’ throughout, although the scope focused primarily on signage and the Refectory there was much emphasis on the visitor experience and as such both research projects were able to create a synergistic balance which resulted in improving the author’s knowledge base and the research validity at a macro-level. This type of inter-organisational collaboration has been the catalyst for creating a ‘collaborative advantage’ in UK heritage sites according to (Huxman & Vangen, 2000). The outcome of such collaboration is expected to increase the resources and creativity and thus increases the likelihood of successful development and implementation of projects involving multiple organisations (Dorado, 2003:141; Boyle and Wilson, 2006:502).

Research undertaken by the VCC into Chester’s visitor economy indicated that there were 7.6 million visitors in 2006 (Visitrac Survey,2006). The visitor economy can be defined as the economic activity in the wider environment within which tourists, businesses and visitors interact (Sethi,1999:284; Cooper,2005:18; Reedy, 2005:4). During the Steering Group meetings some potential issues were raised, especially the collegiate decision making process resulting from the complex organisational structure which highlights the need to develop a synergistic balance between the commercial and religious activities and which is a theme that runs in the background during the following enquiry.

1.2 Research Problem

Chester Cathedral is at the centre of the study which will form the basis of this dissertation. At a macro-level Chester’s visitor economy is measured at 7.6m (2006) this would indicate Chester Cathedral as a visitor attraction has significant potential. The main outcome from the early Steering Group meetings identified the integral role the visitor experience plays in delivering the tourism offering.

The enquiry will be founded on evaluating the perceptions of various stakeholders and interpreting the empirical evidence from a primarily post-modern perspective and endeavouring to add to the contemporary academic debate. In order to address these areas the following research problem has been formulated;-

By critically evaluating the visitor experience, can Chester Cathedral further develop as a successful heritage attraction?

The resulting empirical evidence will then be interpreted in a primarily post-modern perspective and endeavour to add to the contemporary debate.

The scope of this research problem can be refined by explicitly investigating the following questions. These questions can be regarded as the key elements of this enquiry;

- 1. By critically evaluating various facets of the visitor experience can it be regarded as a means of educating or entertaining?*
- 2. How does the core-purpose of the Cathedral affect the atmosphere, which can be considered an intangible facet of the visitor experience?*
- 3. What impact does the visitor activity have on the atmosphere?*

1.3 Research Justification

Essentially, the question raised from this contextualising is; why is the research worth conducting? It seems to have a multi-layered answer; objectively and commercially the facts identify that the Chester’s visitor economy is measured at 7.6 million, where as the number of persons to have visited the Cathedral is much harder to quantify. Therefore, by making no assumptions the answer identifies that the Cathedral has a large potential market that can be segmented and targeted to identify and understand customer’s needs with the intention of making recommended actions to deliver the product effectively. The visitor economy can be analysed further to demonstrate that the type of visit has great importance for the proposed research. For instance using data sourced from VCC from applying the Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Model (STEAM) the visitor economy of Chester has been segmented into different types of visitor, Fig 1.1 shows the breakdown of Chester’s visitor economy; -

Fig.1.1

Tourist Numbers (Thousands)	2005
Serviced Accommodation	554.41
Non-Serviced Accommodation	40.93
Stayed with Friends	170.60
Day Visitors	6,924.94
TOTAL	7,690.89

Source: VCC applying STEAM 2005.

Fig 1.1 clearly shows that the majority of the visitor economy is made up of day visitors and reinforces the point that this market has great potential. In addition to this, the economic impact of these day visitors is equally significant and this can be demonstrated in fig.1.2; -

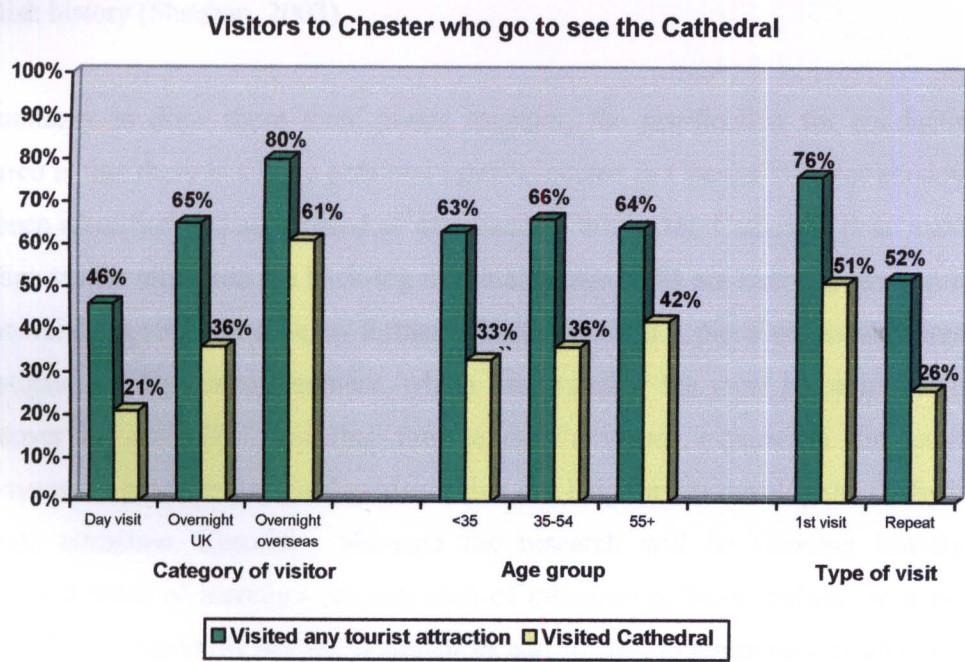
Fig.1.3

Revenue by Category of Visitor (£'s millions)	2005
Serviced Accommodation	113.62
Non-Serviced Accommodation	13.84
SFR	14.78
Day Visitors	250.63
TOTAL	392.86

Source: VCC applying STEAM.

Again Fig 1.2 identifies the market value in terms of revenue and is a clear indication that the day visitors spend the most of all visitors in Chester's visitor economy. However, in order to contextualise not all day visitors will visit tourist attractions like the Cathedral. Nonetheless, such data reinforces the point that day visitors make up the majority of the visitor economy and justifies that the proposed research is worth investigating further. This data has been triangulated with a separate source; the Chester Destination Benchmark Visiting Survey (CDBVS) undertaken by Chester City Council (using a sample of 400). Its findings drew great similarities with the VCC research and indicated that 64% of category of visitor was 'day visitors', 20% 'staying in Chester' and 16% 'staying outside Chester' Potts (2004, p1). As a result, the analysis can be developed further with the Cathedral being the focus point the importance of the day visitor can highlight in fig 1.3; -

Fig. 1.3



Base: All visitors to Chester City Centre n=1302 (source VCC Visitrac Survey May 2005 to April 2006)

Fig 1.3 has much useful information such as demographic details and retention rates that directly related to the Cathedral, but the data that is most applicable **at this stage** is the type of visitor. This category brings together the basis of research justification, for instance Fig 1.1 and Fig 1.2 have identified that day visitors are the majority share of the visitor economy in both numbers and revenue. However, referring to Fig 1.4 the data

suggests that the most popular type of visitor to the Cathedral are 'overnight overseas', further more there is a conversion rate of 76% that visited any tourist attraction and also visit the Cathedral. Coincidentally, the poorest performing category is day visitors with only 21% of the sample visiting the Cathedral and a conversion rate of only 45% visiting the Cathedral after any tourist attraction. Therefore, at a macro-level the majority of Chester's visitor economy in terms of spending and numbers is day visitors, however comparatively at a micro-level the day visitors to the Cathedral is the weakest performing. This would suggest that the potential for market growth and an improved conversion rate could well be achieved; this would justify the research to be investigated further.

Secondly, (according to the Cathedral's CEO) the cost of back-log maintenance is at £20 million and in addition the annual operating costs are in the region of £1.5m a figure that is covered by the entrance fees, gift shop, refectory and limited funding Interview A (13/04/07) . Thirdly, it plays an integral part in the heritage of Chester with its timeline of English history (Sheehan, 2003).

In summary to draw these three points together, the justification for conducting this research is that there is a large potential market located in Chester's visitor economy that has been identified and segmented as day visitors. Whilst the Cathedral is an established heritage visitor attraction the back-log of maintenance costs are exerting pressures for its commercial activities to develop further. Therefore, such a piece of research intends to investigate the day visitor segment, which has arguably the most potential for growth. Moreover by critically evaluating this segment's visitor experience the exploration endeavours to produce empirical evidence that can help further develop the Cathedral as a heritage attraction. Secondly, although the research will be drawing heavily from established areas of literature the approach of interpreting these findings in a primarily post-modern perspective has the potential to add to the contemporary academic debate. Whilst on a personal level, conducting the research on one of Chester's predominant heritage sites was an exciting academic prospect which could ultimately benefit the Cathedral.

1.4 Research Objectives

The research objectives (RO) can be regarded as the processes and phases required in gathering the required empirical evidence in order to answer the research questions. Due to the nature of the research it is necessary to phase and prioritise the objectives;-

Phase 1; The visitor economy will be segmented accordingly and as a result Phase 1 will specifically use the day visitor as the target market to which the research will be based;

- Identify the target market segment that will be the primary focus of the research;
Group Travel Day visitors

Phase 2;

- Investigate various stakeholders' perceptions with the specific aim to critically evaluate the existing visitor experience.
- Identify facets of the visitor experience that can develop the heritage attraction.

Phase 3;

- By critically evaluating and synthesising Phase 2, elements of the visitor experience can be analysed and interpreted using a postmodern perspective on the social reality.

1.5 Methodology

The methodology for the proposed research aims to encompass the complexity of the situation, for instance the sensitive nature in which the commercial and religious activities must be balanced. Therefore a mixed method research strategy will be adopted. Although the research paradigm could be regarded as conflicting, it was deemed necessary for a number of reasons; primarily to improve the validity and knowledge base of the researcher, and ensure that a flexible research strategy would accommodate the complex environment. This approach has been informed by sections 3.1 and Assignment 1 of the Research Methods module, in addition the required justification will be discussed in more depth in section 3.2.

An initial step was to adopt an exploratory qualitative stage in the form of semi-structured interviews (with selected stakeholders) that critically evaluates the visitor experience from the interviewee's perspective. Subsequently, analyse, and interpret, both the qualitative findings and various key workings (see Chapter 2) to design a questionnaire that (critically) evaluates the visitor experience from the perspective of the visitor. The

final stage was to develop an account that analysed, synthesised and interpreted both sets of data in a post-modern perspective, whilst drawing from the body of knowledge and the author's cognitive toolkit. However, it is necessary to explicitly identify the overall limitations of the research. Firstly, the research will only be drawing empirical evidence from the case-study environment, viz Chester Cathedral. Secondly, due to the fact that many facets contribute to the visitor experience is necessary to limit the focus to a primary facet, the atmosphere. Nonetheless, other contributing facets were acknowledged in the critical evaluation but discussion was limited in sections 2.5 and the 4.0 due to the intentional boundaries in the research.

1.6 Summary

This chapter has essentially introduced the research problem and question, with the aim of familiarising the reader with the complex background surrounding Chester Cathedral. Furthermore, there has been a detailed justification using reliable secondary research and where necessary brief definitions, the methodology and limitations have been briefly discussed and justified.

Notes

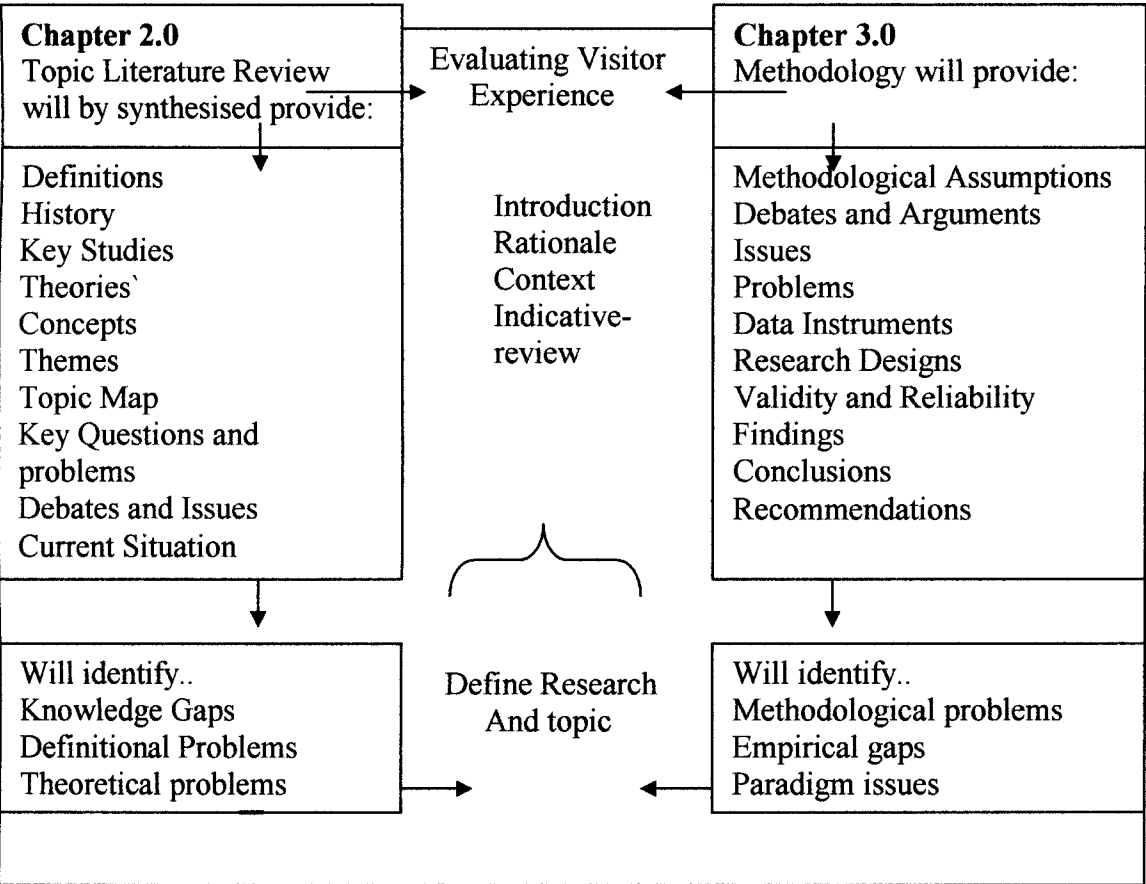
1. NWDA; - Responsible for economic development and regeneration in the North West.
2. VCC; - Sub-regional Tourism board for Chester and Cheshire responsible for training and development, research in tourism.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

The following chapter will be drawing from the relevant literature in order to build an informed critical review of the theoretical foundations and existing knowledge in the area of heritage marketing and the visitor experience. It can be regarded as a critical process that requires an analytical structure that directly links to the research problem and questions, the process can be likened to a funnel that requires a macro perspective that takes into account the key areas and concepts Saunders et al (2005, p57). In addition to this the successful completion of the literature review is by no means the end of the journey, but more so an analytical map or structure to ensure the correct path is being well informed and heading to the correct destination, whilst simultaneously being referred to throughout the duration of the ‘quest’. Essentially, the literature review is the fundamental basis to the study as a whole, proving a cognitive and theoretical toolkit for interpreting the empirical data.

It is necessary to have a methodological structure to ensure the coherence of critical literature review is maintained. Fig 2.1 is adapted from Hart (2006, p157) and clearly maps out the analytical structure; -

Fig 2.1



Due to the theoretically dense and highly integrated nature of the established body of knowledge, the coherence and theorisation of the literature review requires discussion. As shown in Fig 2.1 the literature review will provide the author with a number of key points and considerations, moreover in order to have a coherent discussion these points and considerations will be synthesised throughout the relevant sections. The conceptualisation adopted reflects the complexity of the research problem as such there will no over viewing model but instead a continuous interpretation of the literature, in light of the research questions. The author felt this approach best suited the development of the cognitive toolkit.

2.1 The Battleground: The Historic Narrative versus the Heritage Crusade

An initial starting point is the attempt to define the distinction between history and heritage. The notion of history in its simplistic form is the narrative of human activity from the past to the perspective of the present day. However some regard history as a theoretical discipline by which historians are critically aware of their own assumptions (Lemon, 2003: 288). This theoretical approach by its nature allows the historian to interpret the narrative left by those in the past. This raises a complex and common debate in the literature ‘What is history?’ which in itself raises further deliberation as varying approaches may interpret history in different contexts; for instance if someone was asked ‘what is culture?’ it would be very difficult to define due to the fact that everyone would perceive different factors that contribute and make up culture e.g. nationalism, varying values and beliefs etc.

This historic narrative can be manipulated to fit specific agendas and as such its (mis)interpretation has great significance on the way it can be perceived. Therefore history is not something that can be taken lightly or trifled with; it is extremely dangerous in the wrongs hands, equally can be the source of enlightenment (Black and MacRaid, 2000: 10). Over thousands of years such rewriting and clouded accounts has occurred again and again, often used as a tool for political gain e.g. the Nazi’s use of anti-Semitism propaganda (Jenkins, 1997: 212).

Although the nature of the topic is much more complex and by its own right could be debated further it is necessary to maintain the focus of the research. Therefore, for purpose of this research ‘history’ can be defined as the narrative from the past; that can

be perceived in different ways and, thus can be manipulated for various agendas or political processes (Haslam 2006: 14). However, to take this a step further this ‘freedom’ with history has been shown in many ways – the notion of the ‘docudrama’ where by documentary ‘fact’ is blended with dramatic ‘fiction’ often for another agenda, such as film, and is far apart from historic accuracy (Southgate, 2003: 53).

The illusory nature of accuracy is very problematic in any discipline, ontologically there is a paradigm confliction where by an interpretivist perspective of accuracy is constructed by the individual, therefore, accuracy can be interpreted in different ways, where as a positivist would definitively base accuracy on scientific fact. For instance, visitors to the Cathedral would have different definitions as to why it is important to them; the congregation would say its most important use is its religious purposes; architectural atheists would define the buildings magnificent structure as the reason. Which is more accurate? Within the realms of this enquiry the answer can be considered as none of them, accuracy is constructed by the social or individual’s interpretation and what they deem to be accurate, contrastingly a positivist archaeologist would use chronological facts as their basis for accuracy.

The debate surrounding the distinction between history and heritage further complicates the discussion. The reliance and existence on each is paramount, although the connection made by an individual or group with a particular heritage i.e. cultural is what drives the interest into that particular area of history. Perhaps the underlying feature is that ‘heritage’ is the inherent link between history and culture, with a nostalgic factor driving what is classed as heritage, for instance the popularity of English heritage (Southgate, 2003: 54). Moreover, this grey area between the historic and heritage paradigm further clouds the debate as those who have the political intent can manipulate to a specific agenda, this can be perceived as a strength by some and a weakness by others;-

“It is not just heritage that requires that we ‘re-write history’. History is continually being re-written under post-modern interpretations. History does not need heritage to recreate its reality. History is equally subject to (mis)interpretation. Why would History enfranchise any more than heritage? The reason why there is no satisfactory definition of heritage is that it is too redolent of history to be distinguished from history.” Mclean. F (2003, p16).

Indeed this viewpoint is the first step in engaging with the literature in order to create a cognitive toolkit suitable for tackling the research problem. Mclean reiterates the point that both heritage and history are being re-written under postmodern interpretations, with reference to the research these interpretations could be regarded as the foundations of the visitor experience; what information is passed onto visitors. Further more, in order to critically evaluate the visitor experience (Research objectives: phase 2 & 3) it is essential to have significant understanding of pragmatic tensions in delivering the narratives (tour) but also the controversial issues echoed throughout the literature; that history and heritage are too inter-dependent to be defined which is the salient point from the quotation above. However, some critics believe that history seeks to convince by truth, where as heritage is more of a tainted and exaggerated version (Lowenthal 1998, Chap 4; Lowenthal, 1985:56). The likes of Francis Fukuyama as cited by (Lowenthal, 1998: 3) believe that perhaps the eclipse of history is the rise of heritage, although Lowenthal's now established classic on heritage study, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (1998) by which the author is deemed a leading theorist in this field, such a stance must be critically analysed in the context of this research. To some extent that is a fair reflection that heritage is not under the critical scrutiny surrounding historical fact, nonetheless its importance within the parameters of the discussion is considered vital because by Lowenthal's own admission; -

"Because the word history means both the past and the accounts about the past, these are quite different things- that past that was, and the past as chronicled- are continually being confused. But the actual past is beyond retrieval; all we have left are much eroded traces and partial records filtered through diverse eyes and minds. Historical accounts are riddled with the most of the same defects that critics think peculiar to heritage."
Lowenthal (1998, p6)

This quotation aptly recognises that history is built upon two things; the actual past and those tainted records that have filtered through under the control of the interpreter(s). In the context of the research it is Heritage and Press Officer at Chester Cathedral who is responsible for the tour and as such interprets the historic narratives and thereby manipulates visitor experience's. The confliction between the actual and the 'maybe' can never be definitively resolved as the 'truth' can never be retrieved, ironically Lowenthal indicates that those defects that taint heritage, haunt his favoured history as well.

Although the purpose of this chapter is to review the literature in a critically analytical manner, the complexity of these conflicting academic debates requires the discussion to be synthesised; with particular attention paid by the author in defining the difference between the two concepts. As such it is necessary to take the debate a step further using an illustration set within the context of the research; the Cathedral has maintained its **historic** core-purpose for around 1100 years as a place of worship. However, in the current environment the Cathedral could be deemed an integral part in England's cultural **heritage** (Heritage-Trail, 2006). Perhaps some aspects that comprise its 'history' have been altered by time and hindsight, nonetheless the Cathedral's core-purpose as a place of worship seems not to have been altered from this clouded and biased version of history known as 'heritage' (Lowenthal, 1985).

While, much of what the critics say of heritage is quite true. The definitive fact is that those defects that are riddled in heritage are present in history due to the nature of how individuals and groups (mis)interpret and manipulate with political intent. In essence, this has great significance in terms of the research, although Chester Cathedral's historic narrative may continuously fight between the actual past and the tainted interpretation of that past, the agenda of creating an effective visitor experience greatly influences that manipulation. Therefore, by successfully manipulating the visitor experience so that the interpreters (visitors) fully enjoy their 'experience' the Cathedral can further develop as a heritage attraction. For instance, the Cathedral has several different tours which have been collated from the historical narrative, (which would include that confliction earlier raised) the key historical points that make-up the tour(s) would be interpreted and manipulated by the Heritage and Press Officer and as such that manipulated visitor experience is also open to being perceived and interpreted in different ways; a comparative trait that heritage and history have.

Contrastingly though, one fundamental difference is the inherent link between that heritage site (Chester Cathedral) and the importance cultural values have on the situation, where by cultural importance can be inherited from generation to generation in terms of traditions, values, artefacts and ancient monuments (Walle, 1998: 83). To expand on an earlier example; two types of visitor, those with strong religious values and those atheist architects would be influenced to some extent by these cultural factors when interpreting the visitor experience and as such perceive the experience in various ways.

Interestingly (Boniface and Fowler,1993:31) define heritage to have no existence as its has no intrinsic meaning “until those bits of wood, stone, mud and metal gain value-laden significance in terms of anthropogenic terms”. Furthermore (Drummond and Yeoman, 2003:6) identify that heritage visitors go not just to see artefacts but also to ‘feel’ what happened at a given time and each individual will come away with a different experience, having probably arrived at the site with different expectations in the first place; further reinforcing the author’s definition of heritage.

In summary, this raises a number of questions; what significance does this controversy have on equipping the author with the suitable knowledge base for tackling the research problem? And where does the research problem fit in the body of knowledge? Firstly it could be argued that engaging with the controversial history and heritage debate has lead to other discussions being brought to light that warrant further in-depth discussion such as the post-modern perspective, which in turn lay the analytical foundations to this chapter and indeed the whole study.

Moreover in answering the second question; the benefits are two-fold at a macro-level the distinction between history and heritage is difficult to differentiate, which is reflected in the literature. Their underlying assumptions and flaws are too redolent of each other; however the inherent link between cultural forces and heritage is certainly apparent and could be regarded as an influencing factor in interpreting the visitor experience. Secondly, it identifies where the research problem sits in the current literature and how the visitor experience can be interpreted and manipulated. In addition to this, by engaging in the current debate it raises a specific research question embedded around the affect the core-purpose has on the visitor experience. For instance by manipulating the visitor experience to a certain agenda is the fundamental basis of the Cathedral being affected, in a positive or negative way.

2.2 The Post-modern Perspective

As established from the previous section heritage is a phenomenon that focuses on cultural factors that can be perceived in many ways. This brings postmodernism to the forefront; again the academic debate is complex and far from definitive, although equally the link between history and post-modern thought is driven by interpretation, where by “the rise of heritage to some extent parallels the post-modern turn. It may be regarded as a ‘post-modern institution’ since it reflects or incorporates the most studied and discussed condition of postmodernism” Mclean (2003, p16).

However, before considering postmodernity, it is necessary to briefly acknowledge the role ‘modernism’ has to play in the discussion. Modernity entered history during the ‘enlightenment period’, promising to liberate humankind from ignorance and irrationality (Rosenau,1992:5). The key writer here is (Lyotard,1984:16) where by his commentary about the development of metanarratives, implies rigid objectivism and an ultimate, thorough analysis of the world from a “scientific” and rational perspective. Modernistic champion theorists included Darwin, Marx and Freud all attempting to empirically explain social phenomenon through rivalled metanarratives with the main aim to present a society that was transparent to its members as structured and understandable (Bertens,1995:16) and (Vattimo,1992). Goulding (2003:153) develops this ‘transparency’ and criticises these modernistic metanarratives such as Marxism, capitalism and humanism; in that it is near impossible to understand these structures as they are “chaotic and confusing”. Moreover, the methodological assumptions that underpin this concept, could certainly be regarded as objectivist where by the social phenomenon are independent to the social actors and indeed the role of science is paramount in researching the social reality; the epistemological stance of positivism (Bryman:2004:11).

By contrast postmodernism, rejects authority, unity, continuity, purpose, and commitment. Thus, is characterised by complexity, multiplicity, fragmentation and resistance for any specific goal or point of view (Venkatesh, 1989) as cited by (Mclean, 2003:16). It is important to note the literature on post-modernism is vast and by its nature, ever expanding and further confusing, due to the fact that there are probably as many forms of postmodernism as there are postmodernists (Featherstone,1991: 8). This factor can be regarded as a salient feature with regards to the RO: Phase 3, essentially the knowledge base and coverage in the literature for critically evaluating the visitor experience is very

systematic and well covered, although still requires in-depth thought and focus. Whilst on the other hand, interpreting the empirical data in the post-modern perspective requires both horizontal and vertical integration from an abundance of references and theorists. The general overview of the post-modern literature is that there is a 'backbone' of older key workings (Jameson, 1990; Eco, 1987; Baudrillard,1983; Venkatesh, 1992; Venkatesh,1995; Lyotard, 1984) that have explicitly explored the fundamental ideology and related it to the modern world at a macro-level with some recent journals related to heritage (Hannabuss, 1999; Vaosse, 2007). Conversely, the lack of recent studies using a Cathedral as a case-study and moreover interpreting the visitor experience in a Postmodern perspective would indicate that the research problem still has originality and has not been over covered, further justifying the research.

It is necessary to identify that the contributions to this literature come from a multitude of disciplines, and as such the vocabularies and perspectives differ greatly. In addition to this an attempt to fit all discussions into one concise framework would be at best, difficult. There does seem to be one single consensus; there is no single way in which you perceive reality and as such there should be a recognition of the difference, diversity of metanarratives that liberate conformity and the ability for individuals to 'experience' as many as desired Mclean (2003), as such there is no one dominant philosophy, ideology or agenda (Dholakia, Firat and Venkatesh,1992: 41).

The linkages between the post-modern concept and heritage are very apparent, referring to Drummond et al (2003, p6), heritage visitors all have different expectations and as such perceive and interpret their visit in different ways; multiplicity. This hyperreality; multiple-interpretation of multiple-realities, is one of the most commonly covered post-modern conditions in the literature and as such warrants further discussion. Indeed, (Venkatesh,1992:201) believes the current post-modern society is dominated by the media and as a result, the creation of a hyperreality (Eco,1987) where there is a depthlessness and focus on a superficial "reality" (Jameson,1990) in a world mediated by simulation and hyperreal experiences (Baudrillard,1983). Essentially, the term hyper-reality is used to represent the contemporary experience (Pile,2005:244), which includes the media domination; however equally important is the role culture plays in the ideological function. A widely used metaphor in the context of tourism is the study undertaken by Fjellman(1992:28) into Walt Disney experience, he argues that culture is made up of maps and sets of maps serve as legitimations .To interpret this metaphor in

the context of research problem, visitors that embark on the heritage experience at the Cathedral all have different sets of maps; starting their journey from various places, asking for directions along the way which they hope are clear, correct and easy to understand with the ultimate aim of arriving at the destination they intended to reach. However, once they arrive it may not be what they expected, but simply the visitors purpose (religious, architecture, heritage) of visit affects their expectations of their experience, the tour itself has a major impact on the way in which the historic narrative is delivered and as such each visitor hopes to have the experience they wanted, which may well vary due to different 'routes taken'; multiplicity. Essentially the 'journey' of post-modern interpretation is of equal importance as the 'destination'.

Further more, Jameson, a key writer in this area argues that this development is an integral part of the contemporary experience, more over it's important to regain our sense of place through developing a conceptual language and theoretical structures of the post-modern experience(s); which he described as 'cognitive mapping' (Jameson,1984:89).

This 'cognitive mapping' and the importance of culture raises the earlier discussion surrounding the history/ heritage; in the attempt of creating the 'feeling of heritage' through cultural values (Boniface et al,1993), much is focused on creating a hyperreal experience, some critics believe this to be clouded and lacks the factual truth of history (Lowenthal,1998). Nonetheless through simulation and the attempt to create a superficial reality (visitor experience), the heritage visitor is exposed to this hyperreality and as such interpret the experience in different ways, due to the fact there is more than one way to perceive a reality (McLean, 2003), whether it be superficial or not. Hyper-reality is contentious issue by its own right; difficult to define yet Baudrillard's key workings have eased this complex debate;

"Hyper-reality perhaps should not be read as a hypothesis, nor as a concept but treated as a tool that specifically distinguishes a particular mode of experiencing the world and making sense of it." Baudrillard (1988, p28)

To illustrate this further, the view that hyper-reality should be treated as a tool for understanding this multiplicity can be directly linked to the development of the visitor experience and its interpretive meaning. This superficial-reality is present through-out the heritage industry, e.g. Jorvik Centre, York. However, as postmodernism can be

interpreted in different ways another perspective of hyper-reality is that this 'tool' for experiencing the world and making sense of it, could be regarded as the 'visitor experience' itself. Just as the author will use the literature review to equip themselves with an adequate 'cognitive toolkit' to deal with the research problem, the visitor may use the various facets (signage, content, delivery) of the visitor experience as a 'tool' to making sense of the heritage experience at the Cathedral. The facets of the visitor experience will be discussed in more depth later in the chapter as they raise a key research question regarding how to critically evaluate the visitor experience.

In addition to this, the methodological assumptions underpinning Postmodernism and indeed these multiple realities and various ways in which they can be perceived reflect this, for instance hyper-reality adopts a constructivist ontology; -

"where by reality can be constructed/ understood only by means of a conceptual system, there can be no one objective social reality as different cultures and societies have different conceptual systems." Warhurst (2006)

Further more, an interpretivist epistemology epitomises the Postmodern perspective, in that the social actors (humans) play distinctively different roles in the social reality. As such this attempt to see and interpret the world from actor's perspective (Saunders,2005:106) leads to further reinterpretation in the light of theories and the academic literature; metanarratives. This resemblance between postmodernism and interpretation is further reinforced in the literature with the latter deriving from two grounded intellectual traditions. Firstly, phenomenology; the way in which we as humans make sense of the world around us, and secondly, symbolic interactions; the continual process of interpreting the social world around us, and we interpret the actions of others with whom we interact and this interpretation leads to an adjustment of our own meanings and actions (Bryman et al,2004:12).

In order to contextualise this highly complex academic debate; it is necessary to synthesise the discussion surrounding the integral role culture plays when heritage is interpreted and its nostalgic importance separates it from history. Lash claims that any real value to be gained from the post-modern concept can only be obtained by applying it to the realm of culture rather than interpreting it as a defining societal condition such as (modernism) capitalism (Lash,1990:153). Some post-modern commentators are opposed

to the modernistic assumption that history is chronological or linear (Derrida,2004:42), (Walsh,1992:167) suggests that heritage attractions should move away from the use of dates and time in order to personalise that past and instead refer to periods that visitors can associate such as middle-ages or roman period, for instance when visitors go into Chester Cathedral they would have more than likely sampled the cultural environment in the surrounding city i.e. roman period walls and the Tudor period houses, this cultural past helps bring to life the visitor experience as they appreciate the macro-cultural meanings. Some critics believe (Shanks and Tilley,1987; Hannabuss,1999:296) that artefacts should be broken from their chronological narrative and their original context, but also reassemble them with other contemporary artefacts that have also been decontextualised, in order to offer alternative interpretation and so that the macro-cultural meanings can be drawn in a post-modern perspective.

The natural progression of both the discussion and academic debate leads to another key post-modern condition, fragmentation. (Hannabuss (1999; Shanks,1987; Walsh,1992) have discussed the fundamentals in the heritage context; nonetheless its importance in taking the literature review on to a new dimension is only equalled by its significance in reiterating salient points regarding the controversies that have informed this review; *Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (Lowenthal,1998). Again, (Baudrillard,1983; 1988) key workings on free-floating signifier have been the catalyst to much discussion, the most concise being (Firat, Dholakia and Venkatesh,1995:42;1993:223) where fragmentation has been created from decontextualisation, where each experience or entity is separate from its original context. The entity or experience is isolated and becomes manipulable because its connections have been removed. This in its essence is where Lowenthal's criticisms of heritage are founded, history is decontextualised and used as a commodity where the intention is to provoke a nostalgic 'heritage feeling' firstly, with historical fact manipulated to fit the political intent. (Venkatesh,1993) cite such an example, where an historic artefact is decontextualised;

"A sand painting from a Native American ceremonies, was removed from its purpose as a medicinal ceremony, it becomes a separate object of desire as an art object to be sold as a commodity. As a commodity it loses its original meaning and purpose, stands out to be viewed as an object of voyeurism" Firat, Dholakia and Venkatesh (1993, p243).

As in this case where the sand painting has been decontextualised and sold as ‘commodities’, does that automatically mean it is negative? To cite Chester Cathedral, critics such as (Lowenthal,1998; Adorno,1991) it could be said that the ‘experience’ is being commodified to political intent, the Cathedral essentially is still being used as its original purpose as a place of worship. However, this is where the complexity of the debate becomes apparent in order for the Cathedral to survive as a place of worship it requires the ‘heritage experience’ to be commodified, conversely the way in which the ‘experience’ is commodified and manipulated is grey area that sits between controversy of heritage and history, modernism and post-modernism.

2.3 The Heritage Experience as a commodity.

The in-depth coverage of these Postmodern conditions, fragmentation and hyper-reality have lead to the emergence of artefacts and cultural/ heritage experiences being sold as a commodity, and as such these ‘commodities’ become susceptible to being manipulated with political intent. This debate is covered widely in the academic literature; however the discussion will narrow its scope within the boundaries of the research and be much more focused on the research questions whilst simultaneously synthesising the macro-discussion covered earlier in the chapter.

Perhaps one of the most famous critiques in the literature is by (Adorno, 1991) from the key text the *Culture Industry*, it is ironically based around the modernist metanarratives of capitalism. The production system that was the driving force of the industrialised age, enabled unique artefacts (such as pictures) to be recreated with ease (photograph copies) and devalued their uniqueness. More over, those in places of power had the cultural competence to exploit such a position, this is ever present in the contemporary debate for instance Macdonaldisation of British Culture, or indeed the globalisation process (Held and McGrew,2004:26). Hewison (1987) interpretation of the ‘heritage industry’ saw the merging of boundaries at what was once considered to be separate and distinct realms, essentially the convergence of leisure tourism and culture (Goulding,2000:835). This convergence has fuelled the controversial debate (Tierstan,1993:119) which reiterates Adorno’s critique, emphasising that the private spheres of tourism and the notion of consumption have lead to the quest for the (commodified) “authentic” cultural experience in the capitalist sphere of production. In other words, Chester Cathedral have commodified the past to have strategic importance (Ooi, 002:607) in order to add

commercial value to the visitor experience, similarly (Hillier, 1976) as cited and interpreted by (Goulding,2000:836) believe the heritage experience is another example of the industrialised process where it has become just ‘another’ commodity to be bought and sold. The commodification of the past is driven by the markets need to consume such ‘products’ which is essentially where the research problem arises and needs to further develop as a visitor attraction, in essence the industrialisation of heritage mirrors the earlier debates surrounding the commodification of tourism (MacCannell, 1976, 1992).

The heritage industry is much focused on the ‘experience’, critics (Hewison, 1987) of this experience argue that by exploiting the economic potential of culture, is a way of masking the decline of a nation. Although quite a contentious argument it parallels much of the views that oppose the commodification of heritage sites like Chester Cathedral. Nonetheless, it becomes apparent where it sits with regards to the research problem that the past is a commodity that can be manipulated and shaped into things worth selling and providing for others i.e. the visitor experience at the Cathedral.

Moreover, nostalgia is the motive force driving the interest in the past (Hannabuss, 1999:298), much focus has been on the interpretation of the heritage experience, further more, this is heavily linked to the post-modern condition; fragmentation For instance Chester Cathedral’s decontextualising the historic narrative and manipulating it to fit a specific tour it is essentially commodifying the experience and as such, in the post-modern perspective, leaves it open to be (mis)interpreted in various ways. Urry (2002:16) suggests in ‘*Tourist Gaze*’ that the tourist experience, of which heritage has now become a part, holds different meanings depending on the nature of the individual and their desire and ability to deconstruct the object upon which they gaze. This particular point warrants further discussion, it could be said that when visitors go to Chester Cathedral their desire is to have an ‘authentic experience’, this authenticity is particularly important when its being commodified for mass consumption. In the post-modern society where by fragmented lives require this emotional dimension to the cultural experience (Hannabuss, 1999:299), and where visitors search for “meaning, genuine and authentic” experiences, although in reality it is ‘staged authenticity’ (Urry 1995:140) which can appear within the Cathedral e.g. summer fete in the gardens with actors and costumes from the roman period in an attempt to bring to life the experience.

This example brings to light another academic debate that rages in the literature, namely whether or not visiting sites like a Cathedral should primarily entertain or educate. The issues surrounding consumption of this intangible commodity, 'heritage experience' has been the catalyst to this contentious issue, as a result here has been a distinct line drawn between the high and low class breaks (Hannabuss,1999:298), those with an educated artistic or historic allegiance compared to the mass audience that may not have the same level of education or appreciation, but nonetheless have the right to interpret the situation as they see fit.

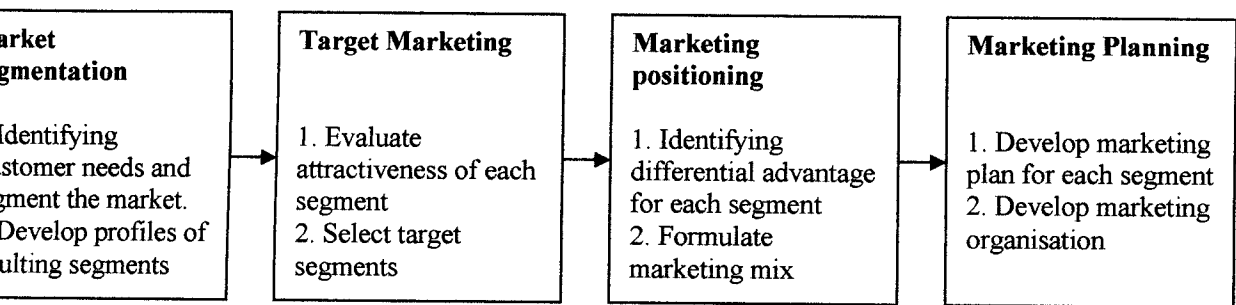
The debate is further fuelled (Samuel, 1994) by criticising the 'heritage baiters' who talk of tyranny of the past, where history becomes a commodity created by marketers, who are not actually communicating with the public, but entertain at the expense of education. With relation to the research problem and indeed adding value to the visitor experience it must be viewed that the perceived opposition between 'education' and entertainment ought not to be challenged as people do not consume the visitor experience as they would a chocolate bar (Samuel, 1994:273), but have the pleasure of the 'gaze' and as such have the right to perceive and interpret on an individual basis (Urry, 2002). In other words it becomes a necessity for Chester Cathedral to have elements of entertainment as well as education, it is a priority not to follow the path of the museum or art gallery where critics believe "elitism is often levelled at museums, particularly art galleries, since their inception museums have been associated with the elite, created by the elite for the elite" Merriman (1991:2). Therefore this synergistic balance between education and entertainment is paramount and relies heavily the various aspects of the visitor experience e.g. content, delivery, signage etc these will be discussed in more depth later in the chapter. Secondly, to cite the 'Cathedral Project' the key deliverable was to ensure the visitor experience added value with ultimate aim of improving revenue streams, Lowenthal aptly summarises; "better that there is a light-hearted dalliance with the past than a total rejection of history" Lowenthal (1985:125).

2.4 The Marketing Concept

As highlighted through-out the chapter the post-modern perspective has significant linkages with cultural tourism, further more its multi-disciplinary integration has been apparent with none more so than the marketing concept; which aims to function as a means of attracting and retaining customers at a profit (Drucker, 1999:8). This has an obvious association with how the visitor experience at Chester Cathedral is manipulated and in order to achieve customer satisfaction, many organisations including Chester Cathedral seek to benefit from the heritage industry by borrowing concepts from business disciplines and apply them in more or less “generic” ways (Walle,1998:26); in this case heritage marketing. The macro-marketing concept is heavily covered in the literature and as such could be discussed in more depth; however due to the boundaries of the research it is necessary to briefly highlight some key points within heritage marketing and its relation to the research problem and the post-modern perspective.

This cross-discipline adoption of the marketing concept is widespread, perhaps the most predominant being Theodore Levitt’s theory of the *Globalisation of the Markets* (Levitt, 1983). By applying a modernistic logic Levitt argues that uniformity in marketing strategy and tactics reflect the modern world, which is increasingly international, technological and homogenous. As such the marketing concept is more in tune with consumer’s needs than any other discipline, therefore the generic structure is reflective of the modern world. Levitt states that this universal approach is the inevitable wave of the future and as such modern marketing can be regarded as modernist; a universal science that creates solutions to the evolving homogenous world. The macro-marketing perspective is covered by (Shoham & Fiegenbaum,1999:448) ‘Segmenting, Targeting and Positioning’ model Fig 2.2;

Fig. 2.2



This model appreciates the broader marketing concept, the focus of the research problem is to select a specific target market within the Chester Cathedral visitor market and explicitly aim to serve their needs (Cooper,2005:643-690). This type of marketing approach could be regarded as the modernistic “generic” structure used to solving a multiple of scenarios that Levitt suggested.

However, postmodernism by contrast does not assume this generic approach and anticipates a continuation of cultural diversity. Indeed Levitt’s ‘wave for the future’ did not anticipate the current heritage climate where by it is a necessity for attractions like Chester Cathedral to fully appreciate the impact of cultural diversity. What has ensued since Levitt’s working is an academic battle ground between the modernistic marketers and the post-modern cultural tourism professionals, one key critique in this context was made by Michael Haywood observing a broader and more balanced view of marketing was required. One of the salient points is that “customer orientation needs to be balanced with a community or product based orientation, this would not only reflect an interest in tourists but also in the relationship of tourists, tourists with citizens, tourists with tourist organisations, and tourists with the environment” Haywood (1999:201).

This broader appreciation of the environments mirrors the notion of the visitor economy (Reedy, 2005:4) raised in Section 1.1; further more, how does this critique of the marketing concept affect the research problem; firstly applying these fundamental assumptions that are based around the marketing concept such as identify a specific target market then subsequently critically evaluating various stakeholders perceptions, allows RO: Phase 2 to be achieved. However, there are limitations; that it does not take into account the complexity of people, communities and cultures i.e. the broader perspective. In addition, this broader perspective “can be augmented by linking it to postmodernism”

Walle (1998:28). In the context of the research problem this has great significance e.g. the marketing concept is the underlying rationale in achieving the research objectives. In summary the marketing concept is centric in identifying the visitor needs and delivering them via an effective visitor experience, however the post-modern interpretation provides more than one way to conceptualise this situation as it takes into the wider Cathedral environment such as the visitor economy and community in Chester.

2.5 Visitor Experience

As each section of this Chapter commences the focus has narrowed; it can be likened to a telescope that must focus and focus until it finally has a clear view. The following discussion can be regarded as that focused view, embedded around the visitor experience. However the latter can be regarded as a complex topic that is hard to define due to its intangibility and the context in which the case-study is set. A useful working in this specific area of evaluating the visitor experience is *Managing Sacred Sites* by Myra Shackerly, she identifies these complex intangible elements that include “nostalgia, a closeness to god, ‘atmosphere’ and the spiritual merit of a visit, on which it is impossible to put a monetary value” Shackerly (2001:20). Shackerly further states the visitor experience has a structured process and is composed of the journey to reach the site, the characteristics and atmosphere of the site, the influence of staff and site management, availability of visitor services and occurrence of special events (Shackerly,2001:21).

Comparatively the discussion surrounding the visitor experience has just recently been covered compared to other concepts in this chapter. In addition, whilst Shackerly’s evaluation of the visitor experience is very useful in that it covers relevant areas within the case-study i.e. nostalgia and ‘atmosphere’, however on the other hand due to the unique nature in which Chester Cathedral is set it could be regarded slightly generic in terms of conceptualising.

A key work that significantly contributes to the author’s cognitive toolkit is a report produced by the government body- VisitBritain. This VAQAS Report evaluated the visitor experience at Chester Cathedral and took into account; pre-arrival and arrival information, signage throughout the attraction, content including delivery and interpretation, layout and facilities including the Refectory and gift shop (Falk, 2007:1-9). Chester Cathedral received good feedback and was awarded the official endorsement; its

importance is further justified by its usefulness in acting as a guiding structure when completing the Cathedral Report, by conducting this parallel study the evaluation of specific facets such as signage were identified as key deliverables from the Steering Group resulting in numerous benefits within the context of this study; firstly, it gave a specific structure when conducting both the interviews and visitor questionnaire for the Cathedral Project which aided the methodology of the dissertation. Secondly, although the Cathedral Project was separate to this dissertation it improved the knowledge base of the author and gave an insight into which literature should be reviewed, thus improving the effectiveness of the cognitive toolkit.

As established there are many facets that contribute to the visitor experience (Yale,2004:9; Shackerly,2004; Drummond and Yeoman, 2001:71), whilst these facets are imperative to the overall visitor experience at Chester Cathedral it is necessary to focus on one; the ‘atmosphere’ will be the specific facet that warrants primary focus and interpretation as it is both in-fitting with the post-modern perspective and has sufficient ‘mileage’ to interpret and add to the academic debate, although this firstly requires defining.

However, from conducting the Cathedral Project research and the literature review it is very apparent that making such a definition can be likened to ‘love’ you know its there, you know how it makes you feel but you can’t touch and fully conceptualise it! As such the following section will be a step by step process in attempting to lay the foundations so that the empirical data can be interpreted during the later chapters in a manner inline with the post-modern perspective.

The principal needs for the tourist when visiting an attraction identifies two reasons; because visitors are attracted to something or because they want to escape something (Urry,1995:142). For the latter, perhaps escapism is quest for the authentic visitor experience which is amplified when visiting a site like Chester Cathedral. Visitors may seek spiritual or religious fulfilment that is only present in a real site rather than a replica or substitute (Boniface,1995:86). This fulfilment may come from many sources; content of the tour, education or entertainment or perhaps the romantic affection the individual may have with the Cloisters at Chester Cathedral. It very difficult to define this intangible atmosphere, nonetheless those elements that contribute can certainly be discussed. Indeed the solitude and calming nature experienced by the author on many visits could be deemed a key factor, or the orchestra practicing with the choir and organ echoing through

the Naïve. At this stage, this atmosphere can only be tentatively interpreted and as such, a more in-depth discussion must follow in later chapters.

However, the foundations for that discussion can be made with Urry's notion of the *Romantic Gaze* appearing to be the focal point in the literature; "the romantic form of the tourist gaze, in which the emphasis is upon solitude, privacy and a personal, semi-spiritual relationship with the object of gaze" Urry (2002:43). This is still driven by the assumption that an individual may deconstruct and interpret the object upon which they gaze, although directly contrasts with the 'collective tourist gaze' by which the presence of large numbers of others is central to the enjoyment of a social tourist experience (Urry, 2002) for example a summer festival. Therefore, when visiting Chester Cathedral this romantic gaze 'solitude and semi-spiritual relationship' with the object of gaze e.g. Naïve or Cloisters has significant links with the process of reflection. A similar study into the visitor psychology at Lincoln Cathedral reiterated this point; that a visit to Lincoln Cathedral is of a romantic kind that is primarily emotional, a product of affective and reflective processes, an experience of the heart rather than the head (Vause, 2007:51), this was based on empirical evidence through visitors discussing their experiences in focus groups.

To conceptualise this with the research problem in mind, this romantic gaze emphasises the individual perception with Chester Cathedral as an object of gaze, further more the difficulties surrounding the atmosphere lead the discussion to focus on the cause and affect rather than the definitive meaning. As such this raises a key research question embedded around the core-purpose and this intangible facet regarding the visitor experience.

2.6 Chapter Summary

In conclusion, the chapter has raised a number of controversies within the established literature and by engaging with these debates focused the scope. It has encompassed the complexity of the research problem whilst aiming to build a coherent critical review that has synthesised, conceptualised and interpreted the body of knowledge in light of the research questions. Whilst ultimately aiding the development of the authors cognitive toolkit.

Chapter 3 **Methodology**

The following chapter aims to outline the methodological assumptions that underpin the research strategy and fully justify its appropriateness in terms of design and ability to achieve the research objectives. Further more, the nature of the research design will require a discussion surrounding the issues and problems that needed to be overcome, whilst drawing from the body of knowledge (see Fig. 2.1).

3.1 Methodological Assumptions: Research Paradigm

The methodology adopted endeavoured to encompass the complexity of the situation, essentially generating suitable empirical evidence whilst simultaneously balancing the commercial and religious tensions. Subsequently, a mixed method research strategy was adopted. However, it is important to note that the qualitative data was the primary basis for the research and the quantitative questionnaire survey was secondary, nonetheless this quantitative data provided the empirical evidence to support a balanced post-modern interpretation.

The mixed methodology in its essence required a synergistic balance between objectivism vs. subjectivism at a macro-level and for the purpose of the research can be defined as the qualitative data collection and analysis combined with quantitative data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2003:212). However, a fundamental ontological question must be raised and considered; is the social reality **external** to social actors or **constructed** by them? (Warhurst, 2006:13). Due to the nature of the mixed method strategy the social actor’s (author) role will be dependant on what stage the research is at. For instance a simplified overview of the complete methodology is as follows; -

- Qualitative semi-structured interviews where by the social actor is subjective and constructing the social reality.
- Then followed by the quantitative questionnaire survey when the author is external to the social reality.
- Then subsequent final stage is the synthesis of the findings from both stages and interpretation in a post-modern perspective, which by its very nature is constructivist as there are multiple ways to perceive multiple realities (McClean,2003), and the social actor plays an integral part in the construction of that reality (Saunders,2005:106).

3.2 Paradigm Justification

There are a number of reasons for selecting this highly conflicting research paradigm, firstly referring to section 1.1, the collegiate decision making process and the multi-faceted nature of balancing commercial and religious activities could be regarded as a potential limitation. Therefore by conducting semi-structured interviews the intention was to 'immerse' ones self in the social reality to gain deeper understanding of these tensions and the situation. Further more my experience in such research situations and knowledge of heritage SME's is at best, limited. In addition, the benefits of being exposed to the research environment during the Cathedral Project included increased familiarisation and good rapport with various stakeholders from the Steering Group.

Subsequently, the author had access to information from the various organisations, but also was a key actor in the social reality and by 'constructing' the Cathedral Project ensured the members of the Steering group had a vested interest in the outcome as opposed to a student solely doing their dissertation. This lead to information being obtained for the basis of the research justification, also this allowed the author to tailor the dissertation to some extent to take advantage of the situation. Although the success cannot be measured by the mark obtained it can be measured by the benefit gained from access to extra information and resources (i.e. statistic and contacts etc), support and expert advice from the Steering group that otherwise would not have been accessible. However, on the other hand there were some draw backs from the Cathedral Project situation as the author found some aspects of the process quite political and whilst this did not prevent the successful completion it was found to be frustrating. Nevertheless upon reflection some useful lessons were learnt that have been applied during this study.

This approach of applying this qualitative technique during the initial stage is reflected in the academic literature; where by interviews enhance the existing knowledge base and familiarisation, thus improving the validity of results (Adamson,2000:18). Equally, the use of qualitative interviews **complements** the quantitative approach by gaining greater understanding and new insights that would have been missed by just applying a natural science technique (Shi,2001:164), it could be said that this combined approach compliments the conflicting strategies' weaknesses. Although some critics believe this mixed method approach distorts the clarity of the methodological position (Leinigner,1992:330). Conversely, a recent study identified that out of 105 marketing

based research projects 74.3% adopted a mixed methodology (Grimmer, 2007:66), further justifying the research methodology as most suitable and vindicating the paradigm confliction.

In addition by adopting such a flexible strategy provided more perspectives on the phenomena being investigated, for further supporting evidence see (Grimmer and Hanson, 2007:58-77;Wajcman and Martin, 2002:987). This contribution from the qualitative stage in designing the questionnaire was important for a number of reasons. Firstly, it directly relates to achieving RO: Phase 2 by conducting semi-structured interviews with the various stakeholders (internal and external to the Chester Cathedral) an insight to what the interviews perceive to be important with regards to the visitor experience. Secondly, it identified specific facets and current key issues of the visitor experience that needed to be targeted within the questionnaire. Finally, the interviewees gave their perception on the complex environment which led to rich data surrounding the primary focus of the research questions; the atmosphere and core-purpose.

The stages in the research process were highly linked, for instance the findings from the interviews informed the questionnaire, which completed the empirical evidence from both perspectives which was paramount during the analysis and interpretation.

During the interview stage the research was firmly set in the interpretivist realm where the author aims to grasp the subjective meaning from social phenomena (Chester Cathedral) from the social actors (interviewees) (Rossman and Wilson, 1991:631). A positivist stance was taken during the questionnaire stage where author was external to the reality and a pure science approach is most suitable. This approach can be justified and informed from Section 2.4; the positivist links between the ‘marketing concept’ and the modernist approach are very clear, more over the critique still applies where by this generic ‘one-size fits all’ approach lacks the dimensions required to deal with emerging issues such as cultural diversity. Therefore, in order interpret these findings in a post-modern perspective the empirical evidence must take into account these cultural factors. Postmodernism by its nature is an interpretivist epistemology, many post-modern writers have often been more sympathetic to the qualitative methods than quantitative (Alvesson,2002), however, the author notes the importance of the qualitative stages but equally the quantitative data gives a balanced interpretation, therefore both are required.

3.3 Critical Reflection of the Cathedral Project

The following section is a brief discussion surrounding the impact the Cathedral Project had on the methodology. As already highlighted this study ran parallel through-out the year with the dissertation, although it was essentially based around the same topic area with similar research objectives; namely critically evaluating the visitor experience at Chester Cathedral. It evaluated the visitor experience as a whole and the outcome was slightly different in that it was a more statistically based report than an interpretation and focused on more facets of the visitor experience e.g. internal signage, delivery, visitor behaviour, Refectory. The author made the decision to include the full report (See Appendix B1) so that there is evidence of wider understanding of the visitor experience to support the subjective interpretation, which also aided the development of the cognitive toolkit.

Although the focus was broader the value added to this study was imperative, apart from more accessible information and resources, the methodology adopted was very similar; semi-structured interviews followed by a questionnaire survey. The questionnaire survey was the primary research tool, as opposed to the literature review and qualitative research of this study. As such the number of questions in the survey reflected this with 26 in total, contrastingly only 5 questions from that same questionnaire being used in this study but their importance is paramount. The salient point is that the author incorporated the methodologies and data collection techniques from both studies into one, whilst the required outcomes were different by collecting more data than required during the Cathedral Project the author was able to ensure that, there was sufficient empirical evidence to answer the research questions in this study. Some criticisms are that this approach is very time consuming and not needed, the author would counter that argument by stating the benefits outweigh the drawbacks; this approach allowed the author to immerse oneself and build a greater understanding of the situation, hone data collection and analysis techniques, improve the author's cognitive toolkit by having a more focused literature review, realise that although the author may have collected more data than needed it is important to follow the natural progression of solving the research problem rather than build a study and force it to fit the data already collected.

3.4 Research Methods

The following sections will be a discussion surrounding the research methods that were adopted in collecting the empirical evidence. It will include the procedures used for the collection of data, the administration of those procedures, the consideration of research standards and the techniques used to analyse the data and a justification of those techniques. Further more the limitations of the methodology will be highlighted and discussed where ever appropriate.

These sections will endeavour to synthesise both methodologies in order to reflect mixed method strategy adopted; the primary methodology can be regarded as the semi-structured interview and will be discussed in more depth. Nonetheless, the same considerations will be briefly mentioned with regards to the secondary methodology, the questionnaire survey for each section. In addition, this mixed methodology has an impact on what tense the subsequent sections are written, although in the main much is set within the qualitative paradigm and the researcher is not separate to the field of data, the decision to maintain write in the third person has been made to avoid confusion during the quantitative discussion.

3.4.1 Sources of Data

RO: Phase 1 was informed from completing Assignment 2 of the Research Methods module: The Research Proposal and from the early Steering group meetings that were held on 27/01/07 and 27/03/07 at Chester Cathedral (for an example see Appendix B2). In addition an informal meeting held on the 23/03/07 with Heritage and Press Officer (HPO), Chester Cathedral and Travel Trade Executive (TTE), Visit Chester & Cheshire which further segmented the Cathedral’s market and identified the day visitor as the specific target market to be investigated. These meetings and the earlier research discussed in Section 1.3 built the initial foundations and identified which sources of data that were required for identifying the key stakeholders; TTE gave access to a database that had contact details of tour operators, but due to ethical and confidentiality reasons details cannot be disclosed. Similarly, meetings with HPO identified the key internal stakeholders that needed to be interviewed, upon reflection this process went smoothly due in no small part to the contacts made from the Steering group meetings.

The next stage in the methodology was to carry-out the semi-structured interviews, this included 5 semi-structured interviews and an email based interview. Although the details of construction and administration will follow in later sections, the focus at the present is on the sources of data; who was interviewed and why the data produced was important to the research problem, its importance to the discussion relates to the methodological assumptions in that it requires an in-depth subjective discussion taking into account the author's 'feelings and interpretations'. The names of those interviewed will be kept anonymous in order to keep confidentiality and will be referred to as follows, their job role will be disclosed in order to offer validity ; -

- Interviewee A (CEO Chester Cathedral)
- Interviewee B (Operations Director Chester Cathedral)
- Interviewee C (Commercial Director Chester Cathedral)
- Interviewee D (Heritage and Press Officer Chester Cathedral)
- Interviewee E (Operations Manager Orient Express)
- Interviewee F (Operations Manager WA Shearing)

There was a necessity to gain an insight from the top level management, however due to their job role and responsibilities all had significant viewpoint (internal and external) on the visitor experience at Chester Cathedral as well as the complex environment; namely the balancing of commercial and religious activities. Although essentially the interviews followed a similar semi-structured format, due to the respondents different roles within the research environment the author had specific rationales for each; -

- 'A': provide a strategic overview of Chester Cathedral and the visitor economy, giving insights into the tensions between push and pull factors whilst also delving into the strategic direction of the Cathedral and its visitor experience.
- 'B': was very new to the role and started after the research collecting process. Nonetheless, he was a retired Major General with a strong military pedigree this was also an important insight to his perceptions of the visitor experience again at ground level i.e. delivery, content etc.
- 'C': an overview of the marketing context and positioning compared to other Cathedrals, her perspective of the visitor experience as both an employee and a worshipper for over 15 years.
- 'D': longest serving employee in both the Cathedral and the interviewee sample, over 25 years. This provided a rich knowledge about the delivery of visitor experience at 'ground level', in addition it was D's sole responsibility to interpret

the historic narrative and create the tours to suit various visitors; there are 11 bespoke tours. 'D' also has an MA based around the History of Chester Cathedral and was looking to do a PhD, and due to the subjective nature of this paradigm this could only be a benefit to the research.

- 'E' represented the existing customer perspective, where by Orient Express (Tourism Company) bring both UK and international day visitors (specific target market) on premium tours to Chester Cathedral, indeed it was her job responsibility to choose, evaluate and organise such trips. As an existing customer for over 5 years she could essentially evaluate the visitor experience and have a unique value-free perspective on both Chester Cathedral and other Cathedral's Orient Express may visit.
- 'F' similarly organised day trips for WA Shearing, Europe's largest coach tour operator although never visited the Chester Cathedral. This non existing customer perspective was useful for identifying any specific criteria within the visitor experience that Chester Cathedral did not cover.

It was decided not to interview lower level employees or volunteers at Chester Cathedral due to time constraints, although through discussions in Steering Group meetings it was noted that some employees/ volunteers seem to resent the commercial aspects of the Cathedral. The duration of employment had great significance, both 'A' and 'B' were relatively new to the Cathedral, which would provide fresh insights to the visitor experience. As opposed to the C and D who have been involved with the Cathedral in some way for a number of years, whilst rich could perhaps contributing to stagnated ideas?

The questionnaire survey targeted visitors that had been on the tour, for the main reason they had just been around Chester Cathedral and could reflect on their visitor experience. It did not take into account those passing by outside or in a random selection in the street for the obvious reason; to answer the questionnaire visitor must have been on Chester Cathedral tour. The type of sample i.e. UK day visitor will be discussed in more depth in the sampling section of this chapter.

3.4.2 Construction of Instruments

The subjective nature of the research paradigm during the initial stages of the dissertation, the formal Steering Group meetings that occurred on 29/01/07 and 27/03/07 were of particular use. Although as already cited in the previous section meetings with TTE and ‘D’ were equally as important. While to some extent these meetings did not follow the research standards of the semi-structured interviews the insight and perspective gained was invaluable and the author was able to interpret situations which contextualised proceeding stages of the research, something a pure positivist ontology would lack.

Semi-structured interviews were considered the most suitable for collecting the data required in achieving RO: Phase 2. This data collection technique was regarded ‘best-fit’ in adapting to the complex and unique environment whilst offering flexibility and variation between interviews, essentially they required the same fundamental structure i.e. opening, warm-up and main body (Bryman and Bell, 2007:213). Moreover, the ability to change direction in order to enhance the author’s understanding on each context, or indeed multiple realities, which improves the validity of the questionnaire findings whilst giving the opportunity to reflect and evolve in the subsequent interview(s). Using structured interviews would essentially be a verbal questionnaire and would not provide the required flexibility, whereas open interviews would be at the other end of the spectrum and there would not be enough focus.

The design of the semi-structured interviews was driven by a number of integral factors; firstly, the overall structure of the interview was based on the VAQAS Report which had been conducted in March 2007 to evaluate the visitor experience, from the perspective of the government tourism body; VisitBritain. There were a number of benefits from using the findings from this report, the report offered a specific criteria to follow and identified key facets of the visitor experience resulting in the an overview checklist or pool of questions for each of the interviews (dependant on the interviewee), to some extent improving the criterion validity (Warhurst,2006). To take this a step further, there were a number of criticisms or weaknesses raised in this report for instance;

“The daily worship and prayers did heighten the visitor awareness of the spiritual side to some extent, but there appeared to be a very good opportunity to develop the balance of the spiritual uses of the Cathedral.” Barbour (2007:5)

As a result the author would integrate criticisms similar to the quotation into the interview questions and aim to identify whether these were actual common issues, if the interviewee was aware of them and if so compare their responses to the VAQAS Report. Perhaps some would argue this had ethical implications, although the author believed that this was a necessary step to ensure the salient issues emerged and then could be aired in the Cathedral Project/ Dissertation and addressed, this tactic was agreed with the CEO of Chester Cathedral and has since been raised and approved by all interviewees. Moreover this calculated step aimed to improve the internal validity and to some extent validate the case data was about what it appears to be about.

The improved knowledge base and familiarisation from the Cathedral Project also improved the internal validity, which within qualitative research can be associated with the criterion of trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba,1985). As highlighted there was a specific structure followed during the warm up and opening questions that focused on contextualising their perspective, it then took a more flexible approach and often changed depending on the interviewee. This can be demonstrated in Appendix C1 Section 1 where there is an example of the varying questions covered over the duration of the interviews. Section 2 examples some vignettes that highlights how the questions asked adapted to different situations i.e. as discussed in section 3.4.1. Furthermore, it shows by applying this technique allowed the author to pick up on salient points and asked probing questions outside the realm of the ‘pool’ and thus ensured that a balance between covering the key issues (knowledge through familiarisation) and letting the respondent discuss what was important to them. This is could be regarded as an explicit procedure in the context of this paradigm to contributing to credibility of the data (Kirk and Miller, 1986), e.g. over the period of the Cathedral Project, the author was immersed in the social reality and tapped into this ‘on the ground experience’ coupled with the VAQAS Report leads to credible questions and data, at this stage.

Whilst it is essential to have these procedures in place to ensure internal validity is maintained during the qualitative stages of the research, the external validity or generalisability is a slightly more debatable; some critics believe no type of validity can applied to this paradigm (Peraklya,1997; LeCompte and Goetz, 1982:36). However, the notion of *trustworthiness* acknowledges the awareness of external validity issues whether or not they are obtainable. Essentially, this study could be regarded quite unique;

Cathedral's by their nature are unique all having different selling points, history, location etc even the procedures followed for internal validity had distinct elements i.e. VAQAS Report; each attraction is evaluated by their individual merit, not a generic criteria (Vaqa, 2007). Thus, is this instrument transferable? (Bryman, 2007:43) Perhaps it could be used within another Cathedral context but the specific nature of evaluating the visitor experience at Chester Cathedral leads to no definitive answer, therefore during this stage it could be regarded less important issue compared to the quantitative questionnaire, where it will take a more central concern.

This leads to the construction of the questionnaire survey, however it is important to note that this stage has strong linkages with the Cathedral Project and as such the latter will be closely referred too. Essentially the questionnaire was produced using the findings from semi-structure interviews and the knowledge base from the literature review, although the analysis of the semi-structured interviews could be regarded as a separate process, the questionnaire construction will be synthesised with qualitative analysis in order to highlight the synergies between the processes; benefits if the mixed method strategy.

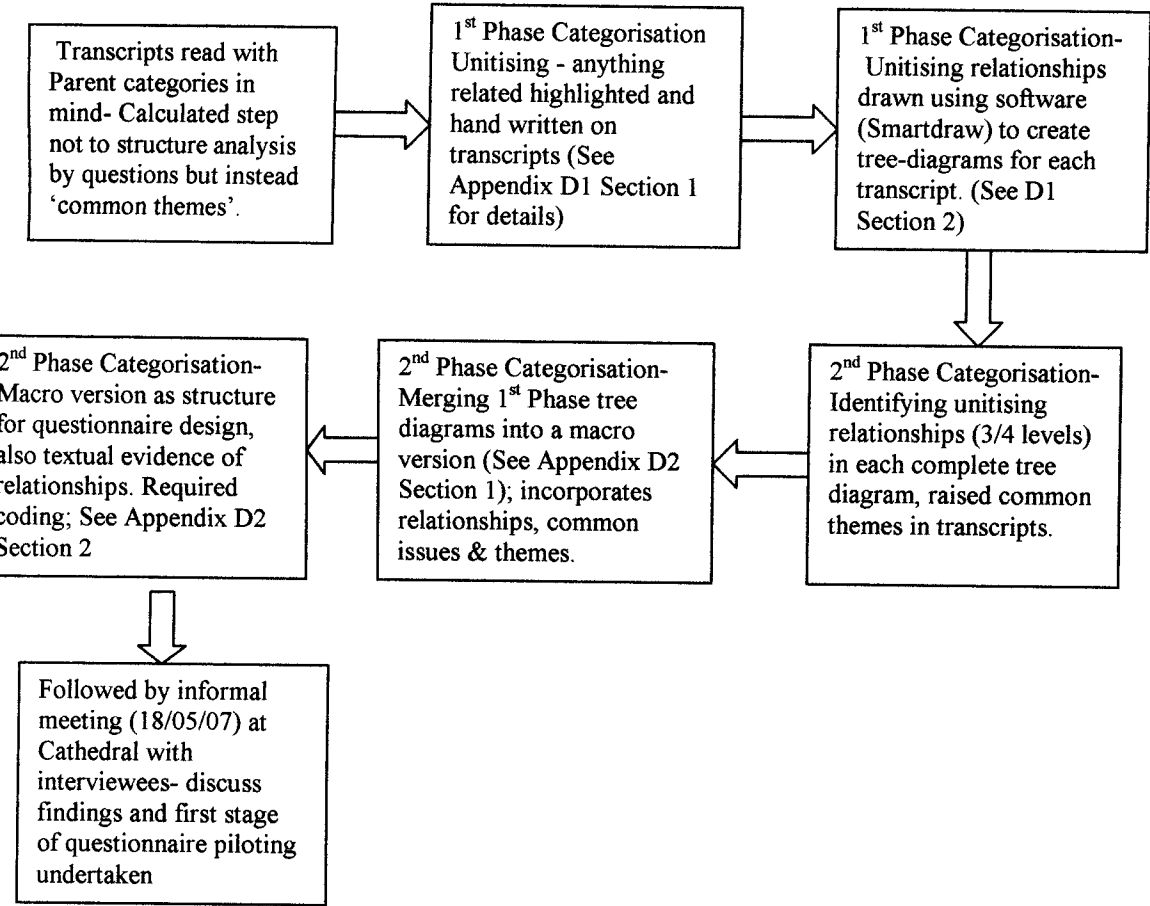
The method in which the semi-structured interviews were analysed included content analysis (Bryman and Burgess, 2004:48), where by the interviews were typed word for word from a digital recording into transcripts. These transcripts were then thoroughly read and re-read, taking into account key concepts from the literature review. It was by far the most time consuming element of the research process and required systematic thinking, after the author was familiar with the transcripts a processes of unitising and categorisation (Saunders, 2005:480) followed, also each transcript was emailed to the interviewee to have an official sign-off processes, to ensure the author abided by the ethical standards set in the research proposal.

Due to the vast amounts of data the coding was an essential way to structure the data with relation to the research problem and literature review e.g. facets of the visitor experience.

For each transcript there was a tree diagram that had a parent category of:-

- **1. Context;** included core-purpose, balancing commercial activities, place of community etc.
- **2. Visitor Experience;** included tour, value added features, atmosphere etc
- **3. Visitor Economy;** included competitors, positioning, branding etc

The following model is a process flow chart of the qualitative analysis;- Fig 3.1



The questionnaire design was merged with the Cathedral Project which led to a larger number of questions needed for the purpose of this dissertation. Nonetheless, the author made the decision that it was better to collect a large pool of data where evidence could be used in line with the research problem. The next stage of piloting was conducted at Chester Cathedral in the refectory on 28/06/07 which resulted in some alterations; regarding how the dependant variable was measured and dress code: formal not informal. This can be shown in an example of the piloting process (Appendix E1 Section1), where by Q6 needed to be changed as the way in which the dependent variable was being measured caused the pilot respondents confusion. The independent variable was the visitor's perception of the religious/ spiritual atmosphere and the affect visitor activity has on it at the Cathedral, the use of a likert scale allowed the question to flow better but also provided the required degree of depth by having 8 points that sat between positive and negative to a key research question.

Firstly, referring to Appendix E1 Section 2 demonstrates the final version of the questionnaire that was administered for the Cathedral Project to show the greater depth of knowledge gained by the author for the development of the cognitive toolkit. It also shows in bold that only Q4, Q5, Q6, Q12 and Q13 have been used in the context of this dissertation, further more below those questions is the special treatment the data required before analysing it in SPSS. This raises the importance SPSS was in the analysis of the quantitative data author skill-base significantly improved from producing the Cathedral Project report, although the difficulty of statistics used in this dissertation did not exceed contingency tables, nor did it need to, due to the research strategy and indeed the evidence required in RO: Phase 3. Although key workings (Bryman and Crammer,2005; Fielding and Gilbert,2006; Crammer and Howitt, 2004) played a significant role in becoming competent in SPSS. The analysis of the quantitative will be discussed in more depth in the chapter 4, see the accompanying disc for the complete Data set used for this Dissertation, although it is the same as what was used for the Cathedral Report. The transparency of each frequency calculation can be seen, by using the frequency and cross-tabulation options on the software.

The nature of the quantitative paradigm focuses greatly on both internal validity and generalisability much focus on the sample technique. Firstly, it is necessary to acknowledge a number of differences between the planned sample strategy and the actual undertaken. It was planned to target specifically the UK domestic day visitors with at least 200 sample cases and adopting a stratified systematic approach, in order to produce they required statistical inferences with probability sampling. However, the actual approach certainly focused on the day visitors that had been around the Cathedral although a convenience strategy was heavily integrated due to the time constraints, resources available and most importantly the number of visitors actually at the Cathedral during administration. These factors could be regarded as a limitation to the methodology and in turn affected the external validity mainly due to the need for convenience sampling required; nonetheless the final number of cases was a total of 131 and of the research standards reliability and internal validity are prioritised ahead of generalisability due to the unique context. The most important fact is that the samples was large enough for fulfil the requirements of the research problem.

3.4.3 Administration Of instruments

This section will discuss that actual administration of both the semi-structured interviews and the visitor questionnaire, with particular attention paid to the reliability of both stages and where applicable the limitations of the methodology.

Initially in the discussion, it is necessary to identify that the intended 6 face-to-face semi-structured interviews was not obtained, the external tour operator WA Shearing did not have the time available. However, they still answered the questions that related to that context via email. Although whilst this could be regarded a limitation in the methodology as a more suitable contact could have been approached the findings were not affected as a specific aim from that interview was to understand the criteria in which WA Shearing choose heritage sites to visit, this was explicitly obtained. Instead the Fig 3.2 shows the respondent, dates, location and the rationale and interview protocol can be related (seen) back to the sources of data section of this chapter.; - Fig 3.2

Interviewee	Job Title	Location	Date
D	Heritage & Press Officer, Cathedral	Chester Cathedral	2.00pm 11/04/07
C	Commercial Director, Cathedral	Chester Cathedral	3.15pm 11/04/07
A	CEO Chester Cathedral	Chester Cathedral	11.30am 13/04/07
B	Operations Director	Chester Cathedral	2.00pm 02/05/07
E	Operations Manager, Orient Express	Crewe, Office	12.00pm 09/05/07
F	Operations Manager, WA Shearing	Email interview	Received 11/05/07.

Each interview used a digital recorder, which was very beneficial as back-up copies could be easily made but also made typing up the transcripts easier as windows media player allowed the author to pause the recording and easily navigate between word and media player. The author was aware of reliability threats to this stage of the research; firstly, perhaps the subject bias did occur when interviewing those internal to the Cathedral, however in the context of the social reality this subjective nature would be expected, this will be discussed in the analysis interpretation chapter. All interviews went well the body language was positive from both parties and there author received good feedback regarding the questions and management of the interviews.

The administration of the visitor questionnaire attempted to have a more scientific approach due to the positivist ontology; as such it was administered face-to-face with visitors at two points in the Cathedral; at the exit of the Refectory, or adjacent to the admissions desk with the aim to target visitors as they were leaving, the latter area proved to be more productive. The research was undertaken over two phases; both phases over identical days in order to capture a truer reflection of the situation with clear comparisons rather than a random snapshot. The days were significant and regarded as a busier period of the week as shown in Appendix F1 “Frequency of respondents by date”. This was an intentional reliability procedure in an attempt to reduce participant error and have visitors evaluating their experience at completely different times skewing the results. During 07/07/07 (Saturdays the busiest of the week) the author had a research assistant to help administer the questionnaire, however the choice of assistant needs to be acknowledged; the author chose a friend that was currently studying a PHD in Sport Science and had a strong back-ground in research, more over was personable and approachable. The author thoroughly went through the purpose of the study and took him around the Cathedral to directly show which questions related to specific facets of the visitor experience, these measures were explicit procedures to maintain the reliability standards.

3.4.4 Ethical Issues

The awareness of ethical implication reflected the complex nature of balancing the commercial and worship activities. The basis of the ethical assumptions was to ensure that the participants were treated fairly and a code of conduct was followed to reflect the sensitive nature around such a religious site. Therefore all participants were informed fully of the nature of the research and that its basis is to ultimately benefit the Cathedral, as such both invasion of privacy was aimed to be avoided. In practice the aim was to create a good rapport with all respondents and employees as ultimately they were the highly influencing factor to the success of the research. As such a number of procedures were followed; firstly, all were notified and agreed to be recorded for interviews, all interview transcripts were signed-off by the interviewees. Secondly, when conducting the quantitative questionnaires all respondents were given full details of the dissertation and asked if there responses could be used in the study. In addition to ensure a good rapport with Cathedral employees the researcher spent 10mins every research day explaining the

purpose of the research, the duration of questioning and their opinions to ensure they felt like they were ‘kept in the loop’, this was received very well.

The author felt these ethical procedures were implemented successfully; as frequent email correspondence has followed and the author received sincere positive feedback from the Cathedral Project which has only benefited this study. Another important note is the decision to keep interviewees anonymous in order to be inline with the studies ethical procedures, although all interviewees signed-off their transcripts it was deemed ethical that if any critical analysis was included only the code was used. Granted the job title was disclosed to contextualise and identity could be found that way, on the other hand there is still a level of discreteness involved, in order to respect all those who have contributed.

3.5 Chapter Summary

In brief the Chapter has clearly identified and justified the complex methodological research paradigm, whilst conflicting and challenging the author feels that due to the nature of the research environment adopting ‘one or the other’ would not do the Cathedral and the dissertation justice. The sources of data, construction and administration of the data collection techniques has been explicitly explained, justified and exemplified in light of the research problem, whilst raising acknowledging research standard and ethical issues and discussing procedures to deal with them.

4.0 The Account

The overall aim of the following chapter is to create a coherent account that combines the processes of data analysis and interpretation. This combined process is fundamentally underpinned by the application of the ‘cognitive toolkit’ that has been developed over the course of this study, to ensure that the established literature equips the author with the adequate knowledge base to conceptualise the data, in order to draw theoretical conclusions embedded around the research questions and overall research problem.

The synthesising of analysis and interpretation reflects the complex research strategy; therefore the rationale for this approach acknowledges that the primary qualitative phase will have more weight in the findings, analysis and interpretation. More over the methodological assumption for this process will be primarily driven by subjective meaning and an interpretivist epistemology. However, the quantitative data will still be of importance as it allows the interpretation to be compared to the perspective of the visitors, although analysis will be positivist and regarded as a secondary process, the convergence of these paradigms will ultimately be interpreted in light of the post-modern perspective throughout.

4.1 Question Revisited

The basis of the following chapter is embedded around answering the key research questions raised in Section 1.2, therefore a necessary step is to revisit the relevant research questions in the order they will be answered:-

- 1. By critically evaluating various facets of the visitor experience can it be regarded as a means of educating or entertaining?*
- 2. How does the core-purpose of the Cathedral affect the atmosphere which can be considered an intangible facet of the visitor experience?*
- 3. What impact does the visitor activity have on the atmosphere?*

4.1.1 Critical Evaluation of the Visitor Experience: Interviewees Perspective

Initially it is necessary to be aware of the boundaries of the research and ensure that those facets of the visitor experience under scrutiny are aligned with the knowledge base and the limitations shown in the literature review. As such the focus will be based around the atmosphere, which by its nature is problematic to define and as such conclusions will be drawn in later chapters. Nonetheless, it can be regarded imperative as to the visitor experience and the development of the Cathedral as a visitor attraction. Although the critical evaluation will draw from other important contributing factors e.g. relevant facets of the visitor experience. Secondly, the qualitative (primary) and quantitative (secondary) empirical data will be interpreted and discussed in the light of the cognitive toolkit and theoretical knowledge base.

The use of meta-matrix table will be the primary technique adopted for the qualitative analysis and will draw from the methodology chapter. The structure of the table will apply the categorisation and coding vertically down the left hand side of the table which will be numbered for referencing purposes, where as the top axis of the table will be the interviewee letter. When a summary is of particular use it will be referenced in the account as interviewee letter followed by the number category on the matrix e.g. (A4). The meta-matrix table coding relationships has been taken from the 2nd Phase categorisation tree diagram (see Appendix D2 Section 2), essentially qualitative cross tabulation (Miles, 1994). The justification for this synthesised approach is that there are clear linkages between research questions, for instance by critically evaluating various facets of the visitor experience (Q1) can be linked to how the core-purpose affect this facet; atmosphere (Q2) also the critical evaluation from both perspectives (Q1) is still applicable. Similarly the atmosphere analysis and interpretation is still applicable to the impact on visitor behaviour (Q3).

The textual evidence has been condensed and summarised offering comparative views of the voiced opinions from the interviewees (where appropriate). When observing the data it is important to read the summaries left to right. This matrix format allows the reader to effortlessly note any relationships, patterns and explanations between summaries and questions. This allows both the reader and author to draw together an overview of relevant issues and lead to conclusions. The relevant meta-matrix can be seen in Appendix G1, but please note the external perspective of E and F have been merged.

As discussed in depth the source of data (interviewees) and the context of those perspectives are of significant importance. Evidently for A, B, C and D the ultimate aim is to achieve visitor satisfaction, although as expected the summaries throughout the varying categories differ. This distinction has a strong relationship with the job role and responsibilities, for instance A aims to make the Cathedral a key attraction in Chester which could be regarded as a strategic objective and reflects A's job role. Similarly, D feels that the way in which the tours are put together is more of a salient point with regards to the visitor satisfaction, neither opinion is more accurate than the other but instead it is the author's obligation to interpret such opinion in light of the research problem and knowledge base. Nevertheless, whilst A or D may have different agendas due to role type or connections with the Cathedral which in turn affects their perspectives, through the course of this account the author intends to draw common themes and issues, whilst being value-aware of the situation.

Referring to the meta-matrix (Appendix G1) the initial coding relationship (1) covers the customer profile and satisfaction with regards to the visitor experience, which draws from the fundamentals of the marketing concept, identifying the target market (Levitt,1983) and the basis of people coming to the Cathedral; the purpose of visit. However, this macro-analysis requires a balanced evaluation and as such it draws on the interviewees perceptions of what Chester Cathedral offers in terms of added value and unique authenticity to the visitor experience (2). Equally, throughout the interviews it became apparent that visitor experience and in particular the tour had some limitations and as such these common issues became very apparent such as signage, Guideport (audio tour), welcome etc whilst these could be regarded as separate facets it important to note their impact on the 'atmosphere' which B regards key to visitor satisfaction and a unique experience (B1). To convert this surmised macro-analysis and discussion into the foundations of a conclusive answer it is necessary to take this critical evaluation a step further and interpret it in the light of literature whether or not the visitor experience can be regarded as a means of entertaining or educating?

4.1.2 Critical Evaluation of the Visitor Experience: Visitor's Perspective

The aim for the following section is to develop this 'account' onto the next level using the findings from the empirical evidence (Appendix G1) to underpin any interpretations. Although, the matrix was a condensed version and every summary is applicable in relation to a research question, the requirement of interpreting each point of summary would be too broad and lack the focus required. Therefore, drawing from the author's knowledge base various vignettes will be interpreted in the light of the literature covered in Chapter 2.

Much of what is deemed to be a rich visitor experience will differ greatly, the post-modern perspective is driven by the fact there is multiple-interpretations of multiple-realities; hyper-reality (Eco, 1987,). This post-modern condition, hyper-reality could be interpreted as the visitor experience where the 'reality' is driven by superficial experiences and simulation (Jameson,1980; Baudrillard,1982). The underlying point is that whilst A, B, C and D have an important role in constructing that reality the visitors and their varying perceptions are equally important. These heritage visitors all have different expectations and outcomes from their visit which will lead to them perceiving and interpreting their visit to Chester Cathedral in different ways, therefore their purpose of visit becomes ever important.

It is necessary to draw from the quantitative evidence in order to give a reflection of the visitor's perspective referring to Appendix B1 (Section 3.2) fig.3, which shows that from the sample that the main reason for visiting the Cathedral was as a 'Heritage tourist' (defined as commercial heritage visitors) followed by 'Historical/ architectural interest' please note these segmentation categories were designed and validated by those interviewees internal at the Cathedral. However, this analysis can be directly linked to the criticisms regarding the modernistic marketing concept (Levitt,1983) where by a 'generic marketing solution' does not anticipate the wider cultural and contextual diversity. On the contrary, post-modernism does anticipate the impact cultural diversity and wider environment has (Haywood,1999:201) and to some extent by identifying the type of visitor a specific marketing strategy can be designed to fit visitor needs i.e. specialist tours. In addition, this links to the analysis regarding the core-purpose where A and C identify that the Cathedral has a secondary purpose as a place of the community, which

further illustrates the lack of contextualising found with the marketing concept as this link would be inherent in any sound marketing/ tourism strategy (Haywood,1999).

Although, the above quantitative analysis could be regarded too one dimensional to be interpreted in a post-modern perspective; as such referring to Section 3.2 fig.4 shows the cross-tabulation analysis that further contextualises the relationship between the two variables; the visitor segments but also gives an insight into the visitors behaviour and cultural grounding as they perceive themselves to be. Fig.4 shows that 'heritage tourist' have visited '6 or more' British Cathedral's in the past two years, interestingly when designing the question the author expected the 'historical/ architectural' visitors to dominate this section, perhaps due to the application of a modernistic thought process basing assumptions on a generic structure e.g. commercial heritage tourists would not visit as many Cathedral's as those with an explicit historical/ architectural interest.

However, as the author's cognitive toolkit has developed over the duration of the study and the findings indicate quite the opposite the post-modern interpretation by its nature rejects this conformity, purpose and is characterised by complexity and multiplicity (Venkatesh,1989). Therefore, the interpretation and conceptualisation requires the visitor to be viewed on an individualistic level, indeed this interpretation and evidence ties in with Urry *Tourist Gaze*, this heritage experience holds different meanings depending on the nature of the individual and their desire and ability to deconstruct their visitor experience at Chester Cathedral, more over in search for a unique and authentic experience as cited in interview (2A),(2C) and (2D) in the matrix.

4.1.3 Visitor Experience: Entertain or Educate?

This multiplicity lends to the fact that visitors all have different expectations and interpretations from their visit, but also the integral role cultural diversity plays. From the perspective of the interviewees it's their responsibility to align the visitor experience as best they can to the mass audience taking into account this multiplicity (Hannabuss,1999). To revisit a (Fjellman,1992) metaphor of maps regarding the visitor and their experience, they each start their journeys at different places, require directions along the way that are useful with the ultimate aim to arrive at the destination they intended to reach. However, when they arrive it may be different to what they expected; these expectations are driven by their purpose of visit which affects their experience. Therefore the tour has a

significant impact on the way the historic narrative is delivered and as such visitors hope to have the experience they wanted, which may vary due to the ‘route’ taken. Interviewee D has identified that there are 11 bespoke tours to fit visitor’s needs, commercially speaking it could be regarded as competitive advantage (Porter,1985) through differentiation. By offering these different types of tours, essentially the historic narrative must be manipulated to fit a specific agenda to gain a commercial edge and the post-modern perspective leaves it open to (mis)interpretation (Hannabus,1999). In essence by manipulating the historic narrative decontextualises its meaning and therefore renders it as a commodity to be moulded with commercial intent; fragmentation (Venkatesh,1993; Shanks, 1987; Walsh, 1992). Perhaps D is unaware of this manipulation and does not intend for such fragmentation, by D’s own admission;

“One thing you have to do with every visitor is make them feel special, you can’t include everything in the tour. So I must include what I regard really unique to this building, that people won’t see anywhere else and what fits that tour, although its more of a question what do you leave out? As oppose to what you include.” Interview D (2007:7).

This textual evidence firstly identifies that fragmentation and manipulation of the historical narrative does occur when the tours are designed at Chester Cathedral, in order to achieve a commercial edge. However, critics would have the reader believe that this intention to provoke a nostalgic ‘heritage’ experience is a negative factor (Firat,1993; Lowenthal,1998). Moreover the post-modern interpretation made by the author is that heritage as a commodity is moulded to make history more entertaining. Indeed D acknowledges throughout the matrix summaries that the heritage industry has changed over the duration of his involvement at the Cathedral; it was previously ‘scholarly’ where the visitor needed a ‘degree in architectural history’ to get to grips with the ‘lecture’ rather than the experience. This opinion is reflected in the literature where by (Merriman, 1991:2; MacLean, 1997) various critiques are levelled at elitism being hand-in hand with cultural history i.e. museums and art galleries. As D states, in more recent times the visitor experience at Chester Cathedral is a balance between an informative but entertaining day out (D3), therefore heritage could be regarded as a post-modern interpretation and manipulation of history, where the synergistic balance between education and entertainment is paramount.

However, this interpretation must be sensitive to the fact that heritage may have a tainted version of history, the confliction between the actual past and tainted version can never be retrieved. Ironically, Lowenthal (1985; 1998) indicates that those defects that taint heritage haunt his favoured history as well, he aptly summarises in the light of the research problem “better that there is a light-hearted dalliance with the past than a total rejection” (Lowenthal, 1985:125), which the development is driven on. Whilst the author agrees with the underlying summary, the use of ‘light-hearted dalliance’ is not appropriate perhaps the methods or techniques historians use to deliver the narrative are stale and the commodification of the heritage experience has brought a freshness and innovative intellectual framework for delivering this narrative.

The following vignette directly deals with the entertainment and educational debate from both the interviewee’s perspective as well as the visitor; it also critically evaluates a relevant facet of the visitor experience from both sets of empirical evidence. The vignettes centres around the options for delivering the content of the tour; Firstly, the Guideport which offers audio recording of the tour that is activated by specific guideposts around the Cathedral, at each of these guideposts there is an extra information option available by pressing the magnifying button when prompted. Secondly, the traditional option where visitors walk around independently reading signs and in the direction they choose. Interviewee A cites the audio guide as an issue as it lacks human interaction and does not add anything to the visitor experience, Interviewee B had mixed feelings and was undecided about this technology. Interviewee C liked the general idea of the audio guide but felt that it was not as good as its competitors, finally Interviewee D felt very positive about the Guideport stating that it always received good feedback from visitors, interestingly though perhaps there was an issue of respondent bias in this case as it was his voice recorded on the audio-guide.

Nonetheless, this use of technology was an innovative way to delivering the historic narrative, although the post-modern perspective requires multiple-ways to perceive a reality therefore to take the analysis and interpretation to the next level it requires the visitor’s perspective. Therefore referring to Appendix B1 Section 4.2 shows the results and findings from this cross-tabulation analysis, it shows that there is a clear relationship between the two variables, i.e. use of Guideport and how it affected the visitor experience. A further explanation is that those visitors who took the Guideport option felt that by having the ‘magnifying option’ gave them an in-depth knowledge. As such the post-

modern interpretation links directly to (Urry,2002) *Romantic Gaze*; on an individual level visitors had the ability to deconstruct the object of their gaze through education and entertainment, if they had the desire the option for ‘in-depth knowledge’ was available on their terms. These visitor findings contrast greatly to A’s interpretation this facet of the visitor experience, indeed this notion of multiplicity applies to the visitor who was dyslexic and the use of the audio tour was more of a necessity than a form of entertainment. Equally, the findings from the traditional approach identify that visitors still require the **choice** and F notes that the audio guide may not be best for elderly visitors. Nonetheless, this vignette identifies that visitor experience requires a balance between education and entertainment, with opposite ‘feet’ supporting the continued development and survival between heritage experience and historic narrative.

4.2 Question Scope

This section will proceed to focus on the 2nd research question, however it will adopt the same analysis technique described earlier in this chapter and as already highlighted will draw from earlier analysis regarding the critical evaluation of the visitor experience (relevant facets). The purpose of this section is to lay the foundations for the forthcoming interpretation, as such it is necessary to understand what the interviewees perceive Chester Cathedral’s core-purpose to be before any further discussion can proceed, the relevant meta-matrix reference of these summaries ‘Category 4’ Appendix G1.

4.2.1 The Core-Purpose: Chester Cathedral

This analysis essentially underpins the interviewees over viewing assumptions regarding their perception of Chester Cathedral’s core-purpose and whether or not the visitor experience affects it; the technique of the meta-matrix is particularly beneficial as it allows both the reader and author to make macro-observations with this particular category relationship under scrutiny. This overview identifies that all of the interviewees except F, have the same primary and underlying perception that the core-purpose is based around religious activities and spiritual aspects, which in turn has significant impact on what they perceive to be important with regards to the visitor experience.

Whilst this macro-observation of common themes is important in understanding the Cathedral’s core-purpose, it is equally important to take this analysis on to the next level

and to develop the account in order to answer the research question(s). Therefore, a micro-analysis that explicitly identifies the individualistic interpretation regarding secondary purposes, such as place in the community, memorial, heritage experience. Again various vignettes will be used to example such interpretations; the linkages between the postmodernism and interpretivism epistemologies are all to apparent, the various ways in which a social reality can be perceived (Saunders,2005) and in this case the way in which the interviewees perceive the Cathedral, its core-purpose and other contributing purposes.

However, the post-modern interpretation requires the subjective meaning to be squeezed from the summaries and as such the author acknowledges respondent bias. Further more the source of data has significant importance on the interviewee's perception and (mis)interpretation; for instance B had a long and distinguished career in the army and cites that the Cathedral's has important role to play in linking the present community with memorials and history from previous communities, such as WWII memorial. Furthermore, D identifies the importance of passing the historic narrative on to visitors via the heritage experience which would reflect D's job role and education. This subjective meaning is extracted by applying the author's cognitive tools and knowledge base; there is a clear relationship between these 'secondary' purposes and their background, and what they perceive the Cathedral actually means (4A). The language used within the interviews gives similar insights, for instance C discussed the important role the Cathedral plays as place of community;

"Also the Cathedral plays an important role in the community, we are now opening our doors much more to events. It's our mission to encourage people to come inside and look at things and be in the Cathedral other than to worship" Interview Cathedral (2007:6)

This quotation reiterates the above point that the interviewees see other important roles for the Cathedral in the local community or delivering the historic narrative etc. Furthermore C is not just an employee but has worshipped at the Cathedral for 15 years and interestingly uses the word 'mission' as opposed to objective or organisational goal this could be interpreted that she has an implicit interest where the Cathedral is concerned and her role is much more than a job but its a community catalyst which in turn benefits the core-purpose. Conversely, to be critical, perhaps this possible lack of objectivism prohibited the commercial decisions with regards to implementing new ideas, evidence of

this has been gained from the Cathedral Report as some of the recommendations made by the author were made two years previous by a consultant regarding the refectory, which were not taken up. This is not a personal criticism but instead highlights the collegiate decision making process held by the Chapel perhaps hindering commercial ventures.

4.2.2 The Intangible Asset: Atmosphere

The following analysis and interpretation will be drawing from all of the analyses thus far in this chapter; in particular the interview summaries regarding the critical evaluation of visitor experience in the matrix table. This is a complex research question given the problematic concepts such as ‘atmosphere’, nonetheless the author will endeavour to develop the account and interpret such finding in a post-modern perspective. The author will attempt to use ‘choice summaries’ and ‘vignettes’ to illustrate any such interpretations, although the reader can access a broader analysis found within the matrix table (see Appendix G1).

A salient feature throughout the summaries regarding the critical evaluation of the visitor experience is the importance unique selling points (USP) have in terms of commercial value. These USPs are common themes throughout the interviews; B regards the ‘atmosphere’ as the fundamental driving force to visitor satisfaction, similarly A describes this uniqueness as the ‘wow factor’. The intangibility of the ‘atmosphere’ is problematic when trying to analyse and interpret such a concept into the account, nonetheless B offers some valuable insights into his perception of the contributing factors to the ‘atmosphere’ such as ‘Cathedral activity’ (2B) e.g. Choir practising, orchestra playing in the nave etc. B has implemented strategies as the Operations Director is to encourage and control this Cathedral activity in order to produce an ‘atmosphere’ for visitors that captures the spiritual ambiance but simultaneously makes the visitor feel that they have had an ‘authentic heritage experience’ that is unique to their trip (A2, B2, C2, D2). An external perspective can be offered by E, who brings visitors on ‘5 star trips’ to the Cathedral and particularly cites the unique ‘atmosphere’ which is often remarked upon as the highlight of the trip (see E2). Indeed that the organisation as Chester Cathedral are able to produce this visitor satisfaction which could be regarded as staged authenticity (Urry,1995). Nonetheless, these visitors wish to see artefacts but more so want to ‘feel’ what happened at a given time (Drummond et al, 2003:6) and due to a post-modern interpretation each visitor will come away with a difference experience, as they

probably arrived with different expectations. However, this example is only offered to 'premium customers' with Orient Express and whilst its encouraging that the Cathedral are able to 'create' the right atmosphere this added value needs to be harnessed to benefit the visitor experience for the 'mass audience' for instance these Cathedral activities implemented by B, which ultimately turn those bits of wood, stone, mud and metal into a value-laden heritage experience (Boniface and Fowler, 1993:31).

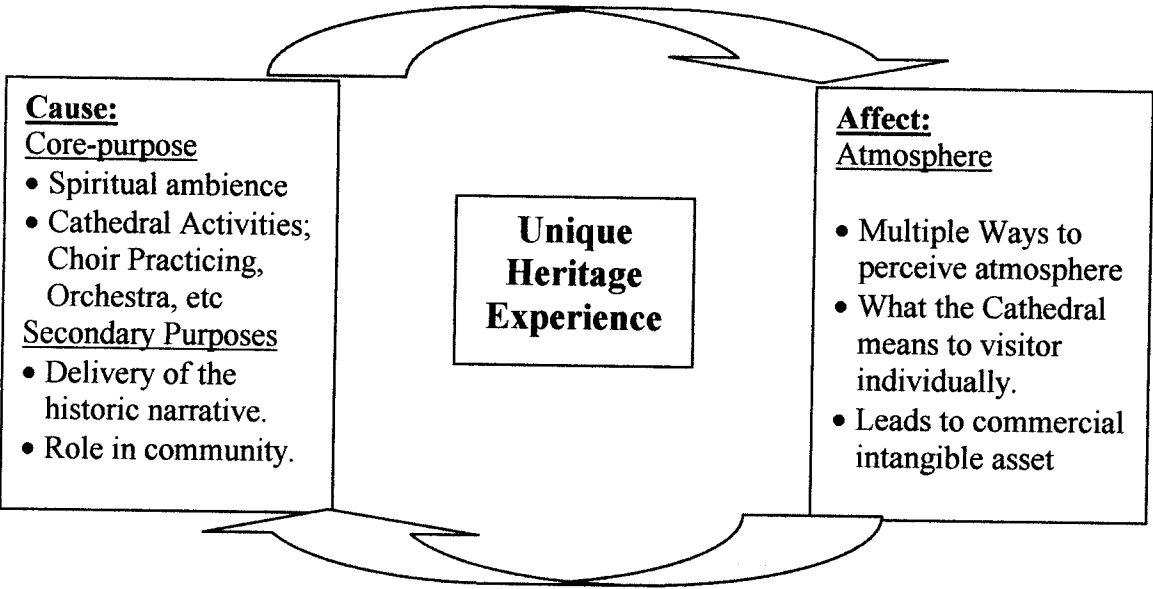
4.2.3 The Cause and Affect

Both the analysis and interpretation surrounding the core-purpose and atmosphere has been underpinned by the empirical data surrounding the interviews. The following aims to integrate previous discussions and interpret their meaning in light of a number of factors; the affect the core-purpose has on the visitor experience; notably the atmosphere, knowledge base gained from the relevant literature and the authors interpretation quantitative data in a post-modern perspective.

The macro-observation identified that the interviewees summarised the Cathedral core-purpose as a place of worship and spirituality, open to all faiths. Further more, a micro-analysis identified various others, if you like secondary purposes, such as a catalyst for the community, delivery of historic narrative or memorial of the past etc. However, the importance of these purposes will vary depending on how the individual perceives what the Cathedral means to them, which in essence is the post-modern perspective and affects what they perceive to be the core-purpose. This perception is complex and affected by many factors, indeed too many to name, but for the sake of the discussion examples like (non)religious beliefs or cultural values are applicable. Whilst it is important to acknowledge this multiplicity, equally it is necessary to maintain focus on the answering the research question and in doing so the qualitative data suggests that by encouraging the core-purpose the atmosphere is heightened to positive affect and made central in gaining a competitive edge for the visitor experience. From a different perspective it could be argued that the 'core-purpose' and atmosphere are the same; in that through creating a unique visitor experience (atmosphere) comes from these religious activities, the delivery of core purpose is in fact the driving force to this atmosphere.

However, the author’s interpretation draws from both the empirical qualitative data and cognitive toolkit; the interviewees are definitive in the fact the core-purpose is religious/spiritual activities, whilst the atmosphere is a unique experience created from intangible factors but is driven by what the Cathedral means to the individual visitor. Therefore, there is a strong cause and affect relationship where a synergistic flow is required; whilst both are distinct the reliance on each other leads to them being interdependent, furthermore the secondary purpose have an important influence. The following ‘Unique Heritage Experience’ conceptual model simplifies this synergistic flow; -

Fig 4.1



In answering the research question fig 4.1 shows that the atmosphere affects the core-purpose as much as the core-purpose affects the atmosphere; essentially both thrive off each other with the ultimate aim to add value to visitor experience through attempting to create something different for every trip (B4). This intangible asset could be regarded as a sustainable competitive advantage (Porter, 1985) nonetheless the interpretation again requires the visitor perspective in order to develop a well balanced account. Referring to Appendix B1 Section 4.3, during the questionnaire visitors were asked to rank their top3 highlights of their tour from the following categories;-

- **Atmosphere:** religious activities / spiritual ambience/ Tranquillity
- **Cathedral Church:** e.g. Naïve/ Quire/ Chapel etc
- **Monastic Aspects:** Cloisters/ Chapter House/ Chapels/ Cloister Gardens
- **Facilities:** Refectory/ Shop/ Exhibition
- **Artefacts:** Mosaics/ Stain Glass Windows/ Cobb Webb Picture/ Memorials

The validity of these categories were discussed in the methodology chapter, although please note whilst the monastic aspect are essentially Cathedral Church they are a key USP in promotion (A1). The results from this quantitative data identified that the atmosphere of the Cathedral was deemed 1st choice highlight from the tour with 46%, this reiterates the importance identified by B and the strategies implemented to harness this intangible, furthermore reflects the summaries in the meta-matrix table regarding USP, which the atmosphere can be conclusively categorised as differentiation (Porter,1985).

Both sets of data require interpretation in a post-modern perspective, which requires the account to revisit (Urry,2002) *Romantic Gaze*, where there is an emphasis upon solitude, privacy and semi-spiritual relationship with the object of gaze as such visitors interpret the atmosphere in various ways which in turn evokes an romantic and emotional process on an individualistic basis, so when asked what is the atmosphere? The visitor will interpret this reality (atmosphere) in multiple ways with multiple contributing factors e.g. the quiet ambience or the choir practising, one thing that is certain that different types of visitors will interpret both the atmosphere and core-purpose in multiple ways; multiplicity. Romantic connection with the visitor experience has been reflected in a similar study at Lincoln Cathedral, where again empirical evidence in the form of a focus group citing the experience is primarily “emotional, a product of affective and reflective processes, an experience of the heart rather than the head” Vaose (2007: 51).

4.3 Visitor Activity

The final research question is less complex and will be primarily drawing from the quantitative data and interpreted in the light of the literature review. In addition, due to the nature of the question assumptions will be based on the analysis and interpretation from the previous sections in this chapter.

Firstly, it is necessary to justify the importance of this research question, as established from the previous sections the core-purpose and atmosphere require a synergistic flow. As such the visitor experience is centred on visitors essentially affecting the atmosphere of the Cathedral, whether it's negative or positive. This visitor activity through tours provides the Cathedral with financial stability which also benefits the core-purpose; however, on the other hand the author must acknowledge the tensions regarding visitor

activity and this atmosphere. Indeed as highlighted this intangible asset must be sustained therefore it is necessary to analyse and interpret from the visitor's perspective regarding this important issue. Referring to Appendix B1 (Section 4.0) fig.4 the finding was overwhelmingly positive with 92.4% of the relevant sample perceiving the visitor activity affecting the atmosphere by 'not affecting it at all' or 'positive' in some way. This is a key finding and ensures that importance of the earlier sections is highlighted and coupled with the 'highlight of the tour' conclusively show Chester Cathedral are harnessing this intangible asset to good affect. This is further reiterated by the following textual evidence;

"Chester Cathedral is not huge, although it does get busy it does not get as busy as York or Liverpool. When you are in Chester you still feel like your in a Cathedral rather than walking around Piccadilly Station. York Minster is so busy and it has so many nationalities all chatting in their nationalities and very loud tour guides all shouting over each other. It sorts of ruins the experience and atmosphere." Interview E 0905/07

This quotation aptly sums up both the previous and the current research question, with a direct comparison with competitors and from a reliable source external to Chester Cathedral. This source requires a premium quality visit and has long experience regarding the visitor experience at Cathedrals. Indeed during an informal discussion with E, it was noted that Chester Cathedral directly out sold Canterbury Cathedral for visits offered by E's company. E refers to the atmosphere that has been singled out by this research as a key facet, but also draws on the fact that there is the right balance between visitor activity, core-purpose and atmosphere. Another interpretation raises the Guideport tour, perhaps by having the audio version which is available in various languages reduces the "chatter" and ensures the balance.

To take this a step further, the importance of how visitor perceive their own activity impacting on the atmosphere is paramount, thus the connections between post-modernism and phenomenology reappear (Bryman,2004) where by the visitor perceives this hyper-reality (visitor experience) to construct meaning and make sense of the phenomenon (Cathedral). The author interprets this hyper-reality as a tool rather than a concept, similar to the author's 'cognitive toolkit' used throughout this study, where as in this context this tool distinguishes a particular mode of experiencing and making sense of the social reality (Baudrillard,1988); by using various facets of the visitor experience such as signage, delivery, content as tools to help making sense of the heritage experience.

In addition much should be emphasised on how the visitors perceive themselves which in turn affects this multiple-interpretation, furthermore it must be noted the integral role culture plays in making sense of this visitor experience. For instance 60% classed themselves as tourists and as such may seek heritage or educational fulfilment which would mean whilst on the Cathedral tour different facets of the visitor experience would be more important than others such as the architecture, equally some may seek religious and spiritual fulfilment from visiting the Cathedral (Boniface, 1995:86).

4.4 Chapter Summary

In summary the account has endeavoured to analyse and interpret the empirical data in a post-modern perspective. Having reviewed the research questions that lie at the root of the enquiry and attempted to develop the account in line with them, the account has handled the data and theory iteratively, whilst both drawing from the authors cognitive toolkit and the body of knowledge, in particular Chapter 2. The use of this approach has endeavoured to draw and develop theoretical conclusions embedded from the data obtained around the research questions. However Chapter 5 will attempt to develop these theoretical discussions to a higher level of understanding in light of the research problem, questions and the established literature.

Chapter 5 **Conclusions and Implications**

5.1 Introduction

The importance of developing the theoretical conclusions from the account (Chapter 4) in light of the research problem and questions is only equalled by the contribution this enquiry has had to the contemporary academic debate. Whilst this study has been based on empirical data driven by the research questions, its interpretation in the post-modern perspective has enabled the author to engage with a body of knowledge and identify areas of interest and enquiry that, firstly, informed the research and secondly, endeavour to develop the account and evidence to further the academic debate.

5.1.1 Overview

The aim of the research was to critically evaluate the visitor experience in order to develop Chester Cathedral as a heritage attraction, and interpret the empirical evidence within a post-modern perspective. Initially the research problem could be regarded as a macro-issue surrounding Chester Cathedral's underperformance in the local visitor economy, which was supported by sound analysis in the research justification. However, the broad nature of the research problem required the scope to be narrowed significantly, which lead to the intended outcome of critically evaluating the visitor experience and reflecting the sensitive nature of balancing commercial and religious activities, whilst ultimately engaging in the academic debate.

The body of knowledge reflected in Chapter 2 offered useful assistance in forming the required fundamental groundings in the theory and as such led to contemporary debates being discovered, deconstructed and re-interpreted in the context of the research. The process of discovery identified themes and connections in the literature in relation to the context of the research problem, for instance, the history and heritage debate, further more by narrowing the literature review scope highlighted the importance that the post-modern perspective had in relation to the critically evaluating the visitor experience. The resulting processes of deconstructing and interpreting subsequently led to the author uncovering relevant gaps in the literature that the research attempted to plug, for instance the definitive line some critics believed there to be between history as a form of education and heritage as form of entertainment. Also these processes highlighted the complex

debate surrounding post-modernism and the importance these post-modern conditions and commodification of heritage, further research questions were raised when the focus narrowed around the specific facet of the visitor experience under scrutiny. Subsequently, Chapters 3 and 4 were fundamental in the research process the literature review providing the knowledge base, the methodology in equipping the author with techniques and means to gather the empirical evidence and then the development of the account drew theoretical discussions regarding these research questions and the following chapter concisely concluding where this account endeavours to address research problem.

5.2 Critical Evaluation of adopted Methodology

This section will attempt to reflect whether the adopted methodology suitably fitted the research problem. Whilst the design and justification of the adopted mixed methodology has been discussed in depth in Chapter 3, upon reflection the adopted methodology was successful in gathering the suitable data required for answering the research problem. The semi-structured interviews allowed the author to reap a number of benefits, firstly increase familiarisation and aid the development of the cognitive toolkit. Secondly, the flexibility allowed the interview to change direction in the varying contexts; in hindsight by gathering more data than required the author was able to gain fresh insights from interpreting the literature and developing the account (Chapter 4) by reviewing the meta-matrix table from different perspectives. Thirdly, by using key findings from the quantitative phase, the author was able to approach research questions from different perspectives for instance by analysing the matrix summaries and by synthesising the quantitative findings the author was able to reflect on his interpretations from Chapter 2 and develop a well-balanced account. Upon reflection this technique was only developed in the 'doing' rather than the 'designing', ironically this could be regarded as hole in the methodology and should have been included in the design. However, this technique evolved over the project life and essentially, will be viewed as the author developing his cognitive tools and skill base.

Whilst the above have been highlighted as successful with regards to the research problem, there have been limitations to the methodology. The first could be regarded as a key limitation; regarding the semi-structured interview with a non-existing customer; the author found it relatively hard to find a tour operator that was willing and had the time for semi-structured interview in similar length to the others. Perhaps the selected technique

was unrealistic due to the fact that this type of respondent was not actually benefiting from the research as opposed to all the other respondents, this was unsuccessful due to the author perhaps being naïve during the design stage and thinking potential respondent would be involved for the sake of helping a student. As a result, an element of the methodology was forced to be changed to a brief email correspondence, whilst the author feels this did not prevent the research problem from being adequately answered the potential rich data could have added further value to the findings as this could offer insightful ways to further develop the Cathedral as a heritage attraction e.g. Why WA Shearing don't come to the Cathedral?

Another, limitation that warrants discussion is the sampling when conducting the visitor questionnaire, referring to the research proposal a stratified systematic sampling technique was planned. However, due to a number of factors the primary technique was convenience sampling in order to fulfil the required number of cases needed for statistical inferences (Saunders, 2005). These contributing factors were linked if there were no time constraints a sampling frame from various day visitor coach companies could select various strata, this was not the case as the access was not available and it would be very time consuming. However, such an approach would have ensured high generalisability standards would be gained, nonetheless in the context of this unique research the convenience technique fit the purpose and did not take away from the outcome just again could have added value, by identifying clear variable relationships between strata frames.

5.3 Conclusions: Research Questions

The aim of the following sections is to develop the findings and interpretations from 'The Account' (Chapter 4) with the intent of creating concise conclusions structured around the research questions. However, due to the structure and the way in which the development of this account was approached to some extent the research questions were answered, in that the findings were interpreted in the light of the literature and the context of the research. Nonetheless, the following sections will explicitly discuss whether these conclusions agree or disagree with the relevant academic debate.

5.3.1 Entertain or Educate?

In order to draw appropriate conclusions from the interpreted account, it is necessary to note that the post-modern perspective is driven by various conditions, complexity, fragmentation and multiplicity (Venkatesh,1989). This multiple-interpretation of multiple-realities required the critical evaluation of the visitor experience to acknowledge the importance of having both the interviewee's (section 4.1.1) and visitor's perspective(s) (Section 4.1.2). The fundamentals that underpin postmodernism such as Hyper-reality (Eco1987), fragmentation (Venkatesh,1993) were useful tools in comprehending the visitor experience and seemed to best-fit the interpretation in the literature review and the account, therefore at a macro-level their usefulness allows the author to be in agreement with the generalised body of knowledge.

However this section requires explicit connections to be made between the conclusions surmised in Chapter 4 and the prior research examined in Chapter2. In critically evaluating the visitor experience from the above named perspectives identified that the criticisms regarding the marketing concept (Section 2.4) were reflected in the findings and interpretation of the account. The application of the modernistic marketing concept sufficed when conducting the macro-analysis (Bertens,1995:16; Vattimo,1992), and in that sense the application of the 'generic marketing solution' (Levitt,1983) to some extent aided the initial evaluation. However, the required detailed post-modern interpretation inevitably identified its flaws of not anticipating the impact cultural diversity and the need to contextualise. In this case, findings regarding A and C's secondary purposes reiterates these flaws in Levitt's Marketing Concept, by not being aware of the wider community and cultural diversity (Haywood,1999:201), ergo the visitor economy (Reedy, 2005:4).

In answering whether or not the visitor experience can be regarded as a means of entertaining or educating, the conclusions from the account made further connections with the body of knowledge. It was established that all visitors have different expectations and interpretations from their visits, of which the suitability of the maps metaphor (Fjellman,1992:28) eased the authors understanding which lead to the following conclusions. Firstly, it was confirmed that the historic narrative was manipulated in order to gain a commercial edge; differentiation (Porter,1985; Hannabus,1999). This confirmed manipulating of the historical narrative by D could be regarded as decontextualising its meaning and therefore renders it as a commodity to be moulded with commercial intent;

fragmentation (Venkatesh,1993; Shanks, 1987; Walsh,1992). Secondly, the heritage critics (Lowenthal,1985 1998; Firat,1993) would have you believe that this manipulation and misinterpretation of the historic narrative in order to commodify heritage is a negative thing, and that heritage must be kept separate to history as it infects it with tainted vision. Thirdly, another key finding that was in agreement with the prior research is that heritage/ visitor experience is in a period of change, gone are the days as D states visitors must have a degree to understand the elitist cultural history (Merriman,1991:2, MacLean,1997). This required further development and as such the findings regarding the Guideport lay solid foundation to any connections in the literature and conclusions made, therefore in conclusion by taking the above points into account and all perspectives, the visitor experience requires a synergistic balance between educating the visitor via the historic narrative and entertaining the visitor through a unique heritage experience. This conclusion rejects Lowenthal's distinction between heritage and history and is in concurrence with MacLean's viewpoint they are too interdependent. Furthermore, this synergistic balance in this unique research context places the conclusion in the grey area between the history heritage battleground and therefore some what contributes to the entertainment/ educational debate within Cathedral's visitor experience.

5.3.2 The Cause and Affect

The salient finding and interpretation from answering this research question is that the core purpose had a significant affect on the atmosphere. Both sets of empirical evidence identified that the atmosphere was key to creating a unique heritage experience, in addition these findings and the interpretations are in agreement with heritage definitions (Section 2.1) which is based upon the Cathedral evoking intrinsic meaning to the visitors turning bricks, stone, mud and metal into value-laden significance (Boniface and Fowler,1993:31). These visitors require a 'feeling' of what happened at that time (Drummond and Yeoman,2003:6), this atmosphere is a significant intangible asset for Chester Cathedral in evoking this nostalgic emotion. Referring to the Section 4.2.3 Fig 4.1 shows how the core and secondary purposes affect the atmosphere at the Cathedral; both require a synergistic flow to create the unique heritage experience. Although it again requires an individualistic approach to be interpreted in a post-modern perspective, as a result its necessary to draw from a key working used throughout Chapter 2 and 4, the *Romantic Gaze*. It has been established through the quantitative questionnaire, visitors regard the 'atmosphere' as the highlight of their tour and the findings also suggest that

there were other highlights visitors enjoyed. Therefore the account is in agreement that visitors emphasis upon a solitude, privacy, semi-spiritual relationship with the object of their gaze (Urry,2002), e.g. interpreting the atmosphere in various ways to evoke a romantic and emotional process, this is in concurrence with comparative study at Lincoln Cathedral's visitor experience (Vaose,2007:51).

5.3.3 Visitor Activity

The key finding from this section is that the visitor activity conclusively had either no affect or a positive affect on the atmosphere at Chester Cathedral from the perspective of the visitors. As discussed previously this directly relates to the synergistic flow required to achieve and maintain the 'unique heritage experience', of which the interviewees regard as an inherent feature of the visitor satisfaction. More over both sets of empirical evidence discussed in section 4.3 helps answer the fundamental research question regarding the development as a visitor attraction through tours which provides the means of financial stability and thus sustains the Cathedral's core and secondary purposes.

The interpretation in the account has strong connections with the Chapter 2, in that the importance of how the visitor perceives their own activity on the atmosphere is paramount (Urry, 1995). The author is in agreement with strong connections made between postmodernism and phenomenology Section 2.2 (Bryman,2004), and further conclusions can be made that the visitor experience (hyper-reality) (Eco,1987; Jameson,1990; Venkatesh,1995) is a cognitive-toolkit used on an individual level to interpret meaning from Chester Cathedral (Baudrillard,1988); by using various facets of the visitor experience such as content, delivery, signage as tools for making sense of the heritage experience.

5.4 Conclusions About the Research Problem

In conclusion, it has been established that a unique heritage experience is imperative in order for Chester Cathedral to effectively deliver their tourism offering. Furthermore, for the Cathedral to further develop as a successful heritage attraction certain facets of the visitor experience must be harnessed through core and secondary purposes. Although to be sustainable such differentiation must be built upon intangible assets i.e. the atmosphere.

Moreover, section 5.3 has drawn explicit conclusions regarding the interpretation within a post-modern perspective, yet whilst this multiple-interpretation is based on visitor individualism the Cathedral can manipulate this interpretation by various means. In addition, by addressing the key limitation in Section 5.2 would offer further developments in answering the research problem. Whilst its imperative to have a well balanced critique regarding the visitor experience, to help further develop the Cathedral as heritage attraction an exploration into understanding why non-existing customers (tour operators) don't visit e.g. WA Shearing.

5.5 Limitations

This section will briefly identify limitations that have not been highlighted in sections 1.4 and 5.2. Taking into account that the quantitative stage of the research was integrated with the Cathedral Report; it soon became apparent that there were three different types of samples, those that had been around the Cathedral and Refectory, just the Refectory or just the Cathedral. This can be seen in Appendix B1 Section 2.1, due to the time constraints and the need for a certain number of samples required the author was essentially restricted to using any visitor who was willing to respond. Ideally, if there were no time constraints the researcher would just question those 'complete' in reality this was not the case. Nonetheless there were only 17 samples that were just 'refectory' and this did not have too much of an impact on the result for this study as those that were 'refectory' still answered Q4, Q5 and Q6 from the questionnaire so in this case some data was gathered, for Q12 and Q13 a '0' was used for the missing value in the SPSS data set (Saunders, 2005).

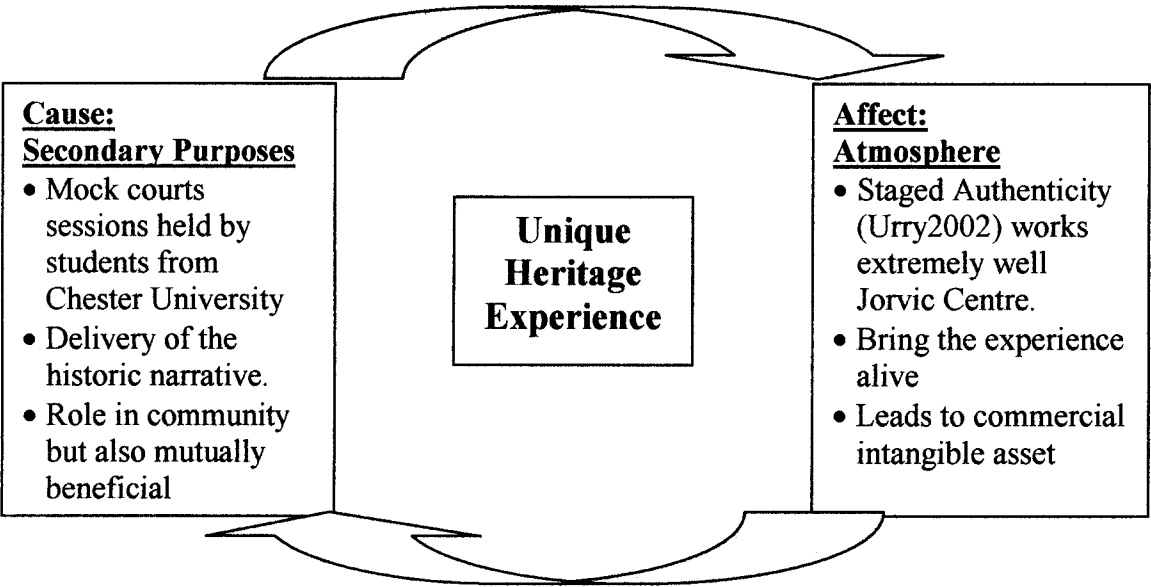
5.6 Opportunities For Further Research

There are many opportunities for further research; indeed by removing the barriers an in-depth study into the other facets of the visitor experience such as signage or the refectory. However, to draw from the issues raised in 5.2, such opportunities must be realistic and achievable, therefore by adopting a more positivist approach and in particular the sampling technique when conducting the questionnaire survey the findings could be generalised. Keeping the same research design but with less time constraints and a stringent scientific approach; different strata frames could lead to more generalised variable relationships and as such the research design be used for other Cathedrals. For instance by sampling different types of groups i.e. WI Institute Members, Architectural Club and Christian Groups could lead to more generalised results and more in-depth interpretation of the visitor experience between variables, relationships, and sample frames.

Chapter 6 **Recommendations**

The following recommendation will be based on the conceptual model surrounding the ‘Unique Heritage Experience’ Fig 4.1 found in section 4.2.3 and 5.2.3, which could be regarded as a ``strategic advantage. However, this proposal intends to again, harness the ‘atmosphere’ to positive effect, although in this case develop the recommendation with the focus on the secondary purposes that were identified in Section 4.2.1. Comparatively, building on the same principle with the ultimate aim to create this intangible asset the required synergistic flow is still needed. The recommendation is to; -

- Develop strategic alliances within the community; Chester University. Use 2nd 3rd year drama students to put on mock Court Sessions in the Consistory Court over periods during term time. The Fig 6.1 shows the adapted version of Fig.4.1 focused on the recommendation;-



The justification is based on a number of factors. Firstly, the research from this study has identified the atmosphere as one of the Cathedral’s biggest intangible assets which by it’s nature is hard to imitate and naturally leads to a sustainable competitive advantage (Porter,1985:24). Secondly, by using the Consistory Court for its intended purpose one of the Cathedral’s USP is being further harnessed and brings to life the experience (Urry,2002). Thirdly, it develops and raises the profile in the community and in particular Chester University, which could open the Refectory up to a younger market (based on Cathedral Report recommendation). Fourthly, deliver the historic narrative that could be researched in the Cathedral library for the ‘court sessions’.

6.1 Implementation Plan

This discussion will focus on the how rather than the why, and will also raise both organisational and managerial issues from both perspectives. The recommendation will intend to use 2nd or 3rd year students and incorporate the mock court session into a module assessment. The students will work in groups of 4 and have different roles viz. Judge, Plaintiff, Defence and Prosecution. The visitors will play the role of jury and give a verdict. The students will design and make their own costumes and write their own scripts using the themes or stories based on the historic narratives found in the Cathedral Library. That is based on the Chester Community. However, this raises a few organisational and managerial issues that must be acknowledged. Firstly a feasibility study suggests that the Cathedral does not have the resources or the competencies to carry out the recommendation solely. Therefore, much relies on the strategic alliance; both parties would seem to benefit; good promotional potential, good experience for students, if the standard are kept high (which ideally will be, as being assessed) unique heritage experience achieved. In addition, relations between the two organisations are good i.e. graduation ceremonies this together with the strong links between, and rapport resulting from Cathedral Report, as a Senior lecturer from Chester University was a key part of the Steering Group.

Managerial issues for both parties must also be considered. Firstly, the design of the assessment must be thought and worked through with the appropriate module course leaders, obviously this requires expert knowledge that the author does not have, nonetheless, it requires their sign-off as an appropriate assessment and also the Cathedral, likely to be D. Secondly, when the sessions are carried out; See Appendix H1 for timescales planning and costing (which based on a number of assumptions and estimates).

The pragmatic issue for both parties include the following; -

- Pricing: £1 each for visitors to watch the performance and which would be limited to a number of visitors.
- Capacity: A total of 20 visitors allowed into the Court to watch the performance.
- Performance: 6 performances run on the day of assessment split equally in the morning and afternoon, each performance would last for 20-25 minutes. Giving

students a break but also new visitors the chance to catch the performance and bring the heritage experience to life.

- Groups: student class size will be based on 20.
- Money raised: will go towards the Cathedral's donations.
- Costs: There will be minimum costs to the Cathedral only organising and students would take the admission fee at the entrance to the court. The cost to the students would be costumes this can only be estimate again see Appendix H1.

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Appendix B1

Report Summary

The following report is an evaluation into the visitor experience at Chester Cathedral, with specific focus on visitor's needs and expectations. The findings will contribute toward defining the product offering and provide a platform for business planning.

The research took the form of a Visitor Questionnaire that was administered at the Cathedral and had 131 respondents. The questionnaire focused on the various aspects of the visitor experience including internal signage and the Refectory.

The following are the main points that can be drawn from the report:-

- 68% of respondents took the Cathedral tour but did not make use of Refectory. This was a key finding.
- The target market sits in the age bracket of '50+' and spend on average 1hr 30mins in the Cathedral.
- Respondents have on average visited 3 British Cathedrals in the last two years.
- 60% of the sample identified that their purpose for visiting the Cathedral was as a 'heritage tourist'. 'Historical/ Architectural Interest' followed with 18%.
- 92.4% stated that the visitor activity within the Cathedral either did not affect the atmosphere 'at all' or had a 'positive' affect. This indicates that the Cathedral's core-purpose as a place of worship was being maintained.
- The Cathedral's local positioning in terms of competition was overwhelmingly positive with 48.9% rating it as 'good' and 33.6% as 'excellent'.
- The welcome and arrival information was rated as 'good/excellent', with the most common words being used to associate the welcome as 'Warm' and 'Friendly'. It was noted that some visitors lacked direction at the Admissions desk and perhaps a more proactive greeting would lead to less confusion.
- 83.9% of visitors who made use of the Guidepost (Audio tour) believed that this choice affected their visitor experience in a positive way. Whilst those who adopted the traditional approach were split between 'not at all' and 'positive' in some way.
- Visitors ranked the 'atmosphere' as their 1st choice highlight from the tour, with 'Cathedral Church' 2nd and Monastic Aspects as their 3rd Choice.
- 80% of visitors that had been around the Cathedral paid, 66% believed the price range £3-4 was inline with their visitor experience, 18% thought £5-6. Of the 20% that did not pay, 65% believed the current price range was in-line with their visitor experience!
- Access into the Cathedral received 'good/excellent' feedback; access to public facilities was definitively average.
- 63% rated the directional signage as 'average/good', with issues about clear direction at the admissions desk being raised. More over, points from the VAQAS Report were reflected in the research regarding numbers missing from the guidepost.
- 47% of the sample rated the Cathedral tour signs as good, with 31% stating it was average

- The “point of interest” signage performed well with 89% saying there was a sufficient amount of information. Information about current or future events was less conclusive with 46% rating it as ‘not enough’ and 53% rating it as ‘sufficient’.
- 66% of Visitors would/ did prefer to read information on an accompanying leaflet whilst on the tour as opposed to on notice-boards.
- Returning to an earlier point, 55% of sample population were going around the Cathedral but not visiting the Refectory. Of that population 43% gave the reason that they did not know where it was due to poor signage and visitor flow. Identifies possible further study into the visitor flow. This is important as the refectory forms an important revenue stream.
- 55% of visitors rated the servery area within the Refectory as ‘good’, and the most common word used to describe it was ‘unique’. Although 17 cases that rated it as poor described it as ‘functional’ and ‘school dinners’. Again further study into how food is delivered would be useful.
- 84% rated variety of food was as ‘average-good’ 84%, quality of service received 56% and value for money was rated as ‘average/good’.
- 72.5% thought that the time hot food was served should be extended from the current timescale, with a majority of 54% wanting hot food being served from 11am- 4pm.

In summary the report endeavours to address the objectives set in the various preparatory meetings and evaluate factors which influence the visitor experience.

The initial part of the report has identified key aspects of the customer profile that can be used as a guiding structure into further studies. By contextualising the visitor behaviour, the complex environment in which Chester Cathedral sits was addressed and again these findings can be used as the foundations into additional segmentation analysis.

The visitor experience received extremely positive feedback at a macro-level in terms of local positioning. However it is clear that a number of areas have been identified that would warrant further study and deeper analysis with the intention enhancing the visitor experience and product offering.

1.0 Introduction

The following report is an evaluation of the visitor experience at Chester Cathedral, with the intention of identifying visitor's needs and expectations; as a result contribute towards defining the product offering and provide a platform for business planning.

The research and this report was the outcome of collaboration between Chester Cathedral, North West Development Agency, Visit Chester and Cheshire and the author. In addition to this, the research also specifically focused on the signage and the Refectory offering within the Cathedral.

2.0 Methodology

In order to capture the complex religious and commercial environment in which the Cathedral sits it was necessary to undertake an initial exploratory interview stage with 6 key stakeholders both internal and external to the Cathedral. In order to; -

- Improve the validity of the research through increasing the researcher's knowledge base.
- **Identify a specific target market that was the primary focus of the research; UK Day visitor market for (full justification please refer to Research Proposal.)**
- Use the findings from the interviews as a guiding structure in conjunction with the VAQAS Report (01/03/07) to design the questionnaire-survey.

This was followed by a questionnaire survey which was administered face-to-face with visitors at two points in the Cathedral; at the exit of the Refectory, or adjacent to the admissions desk with the aim to target visitors as they were leaving, the latter area proved to be more productive. The research was undertaken over two phases; both phases over identical days in order to capture a truer reflection of the situation with clear comparisons rather than a random snapshot. The days were significant and regarded as a busier period of the week as shown in Appendix Fig.1A "Frequency of respondents by date".

The questionnaire sections are directly linked to the structure of the following report;

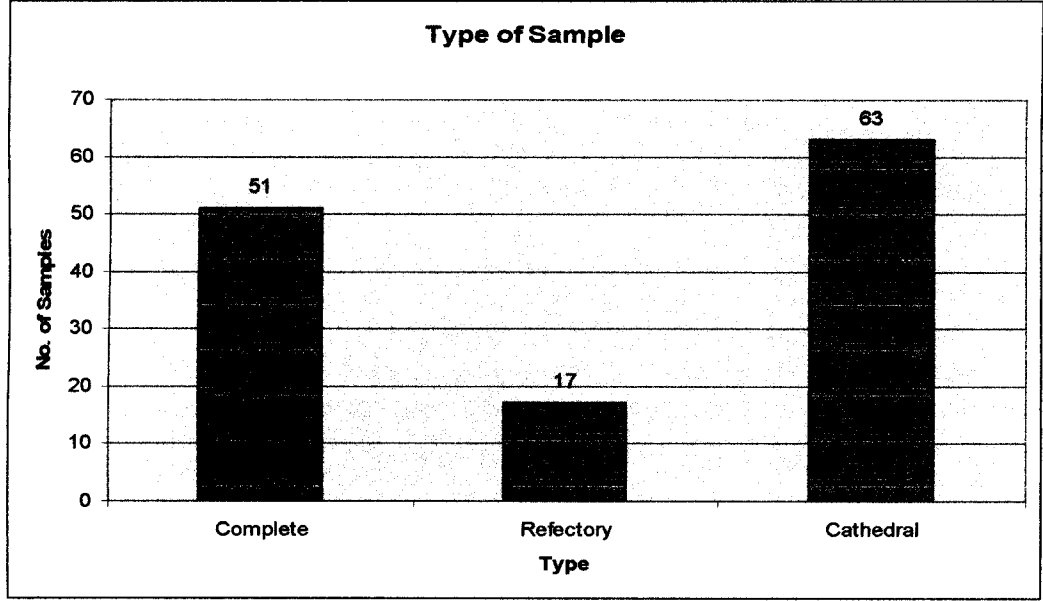
- Q1- 2 relates to the Visitor Profile
- Q3- 5 relates to Visitor Behaviour
- Q6- 16 relates to Visitor Experience
- Q17- 21 relates to Signage
- Q22- 26 relates to the Refectory.

2.1 Sampling

The sample size was a total of 131 and was split between three different types; -

- **'Complete'**: complete sample that had visited the refectory and been around the Cathedral.
- **'Refectory'**: only visited the Refectory.
- **'Cathedral'**: only visited the Cathedral.

Fig. 1 shows the frequency of the type of sample;-



Referring to fig. 1; -

- ‘Cathedral’ sample type was the highest with 68% of the sample population.
- ‘Complete’ second highest type with 38%
- ‘Refectory’ made up the rest of the sample with 12%.

The method of sampling was essentially convenience and although this was a useful way to organise the data it raised a key issue about the number of visitors that were going around the Cathedral for the tour but not visiting the refectory and the need to convert a higher ratio into the ‘Complete’ type. As a result, each ‘Cathedral’ type that did not visit the Refectory were asked “why?”.

3.0 Visitor Profile

To understand the product offering it is essential to build a customer profile that can be used as fundamental groundings throughout the report. The first section of the questionnaire aimed to identify basic bio-demographics such as age and gender, but also develop the findings with a clear focus on the complex environment in which the Cathedral operates. Therefore it was necessary to contextualise each sample by understanding the length of stay, the number of Cathedral visited in the past two years and their purpose of visit.

3.1 Bio-demographic Findings

The bio-demographic findings gave an equal reflection in terms of gender; 49% male and 51% females made up the sample. The breakdown of the age can be shown in Appendix A Fig. 2A.

The findings clearly show;

- The target market sit in the higher age bracket of '>50' with 49%
- '<30' make up the lowest proportion with 20%.

In addition, by taking this analysis further and focusing primarily on the Refectory it can be demonstrated that >50 are by far the largest in frequency that make use of the catering facilities (see Appendix Fig.3.A), this appears to support earlier discussions within the steering group about the age demographic that are attracted to the Refectory, including both those who have taken the tour but also those visiting the Cathedral primarily to eat.

These findings could be related directly to the Ark Leisure model, where by the general visitor could be regarded as a *Discoverer* that focus on *Explore* holidays and encompass history and heritage. The findings from the Cathedral research do not match the same age-bracket (Discoverers 25-35yrs) probably due to the fact that this research is more focused on one target market and the Ark Leisure model is more of a macro-level segmentation tool.

3.2 Visitor Behaviour

The dwell time within the Cathedral has a significant impact on revenue streams within the Cathedral; the research indicated that on average the length of stay within the Cathedral is 1 hour 30mins.

In addition, due to the Cathedral's complex and multi-faceted environment it was necessary to identify the how many British Cathedrals had been visited by respondents in the last two years. This could well be regarded as another key indicator as those who had visited '6- more' have significant insight into visitor experiences at other Cathedrals.

- The research identified that on average the sample population had visited 3 British Cathedral's in the past two years, which is a positive in terms for comparative basis.

The segmentation process is the basis of understanding the customer's needs and expectations.

The purpose of visit could again be regarded as a key indicator for much of the findings and used for cross-tabulation with other variables. Fig. 3 Shows the findings;-

Fig.3

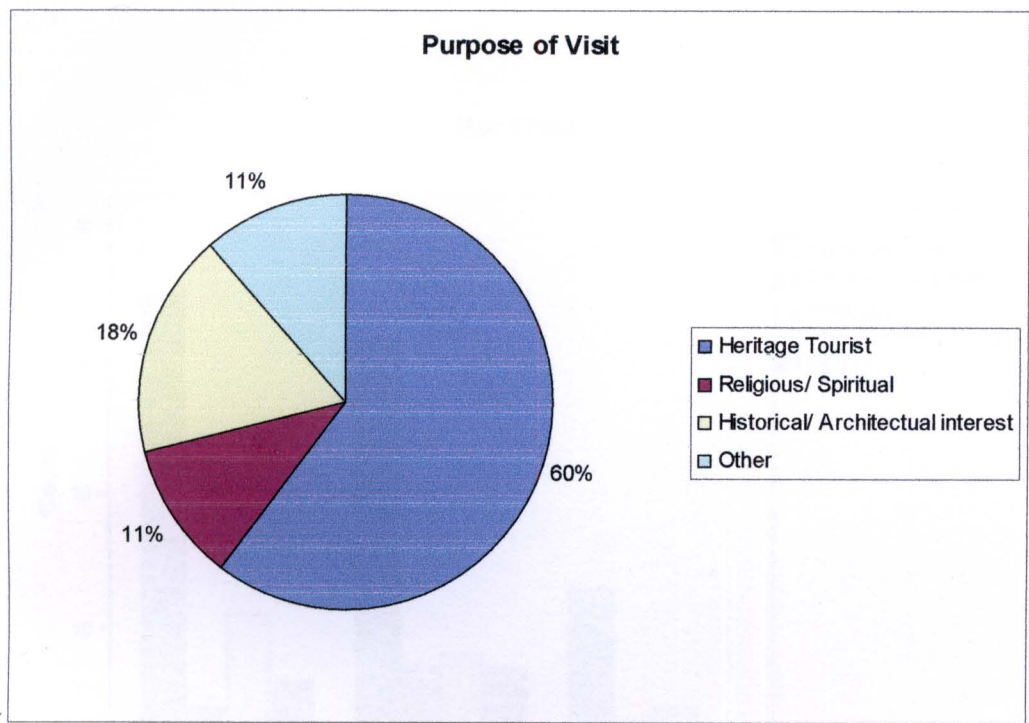
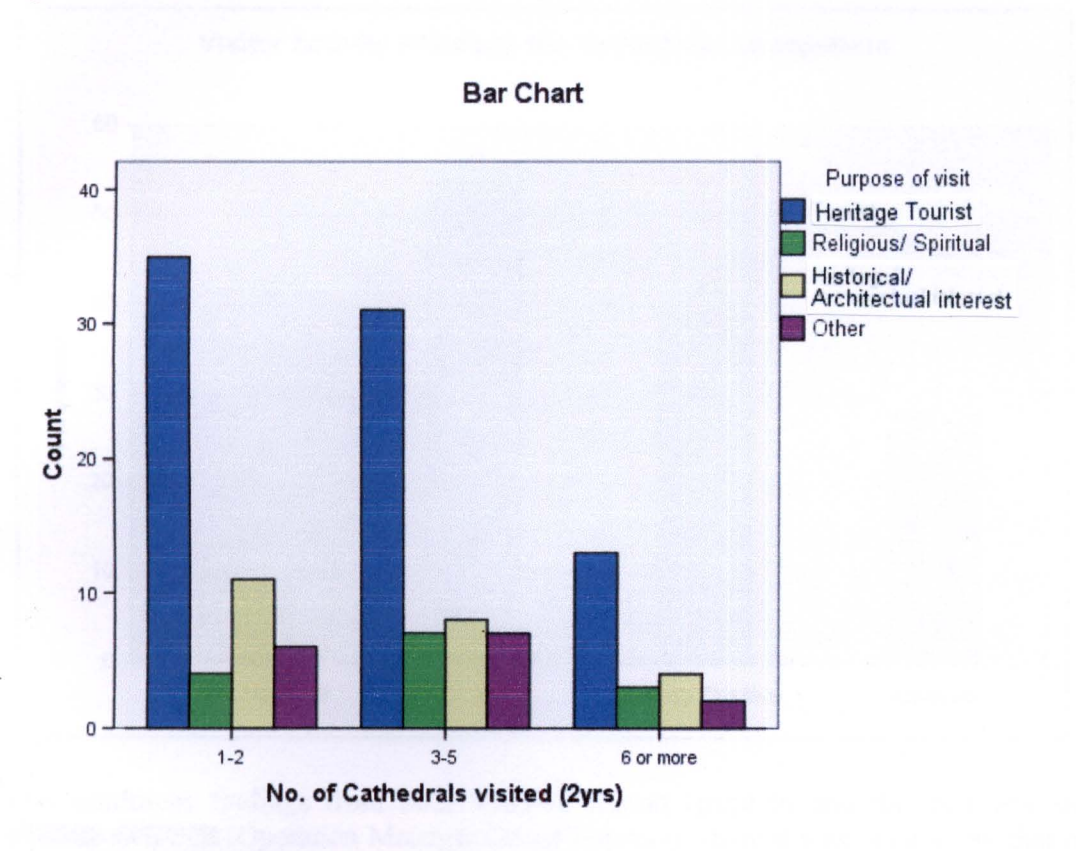


Fig. 3 clearly shows;

- The main reason for visiting the Cathedral was as a ‘heritage tourist’ with 60%.
- ‘Historical/ Architectural interest’ followed with 18%.

This is particularly useful as it gives an indication at a macro level of how the visitor profile can be segmented. As Fig.3 is taken from the whole sample population the category ‘other’ included those visitors who had just visited the refectory with the purpose of visit being ‘eating’.This segmentation analysis can be taken further by understanding how many Cathedral’s each visitor segment have visited in the past two years, Fig.4 shows this analysis; -

Fig.4



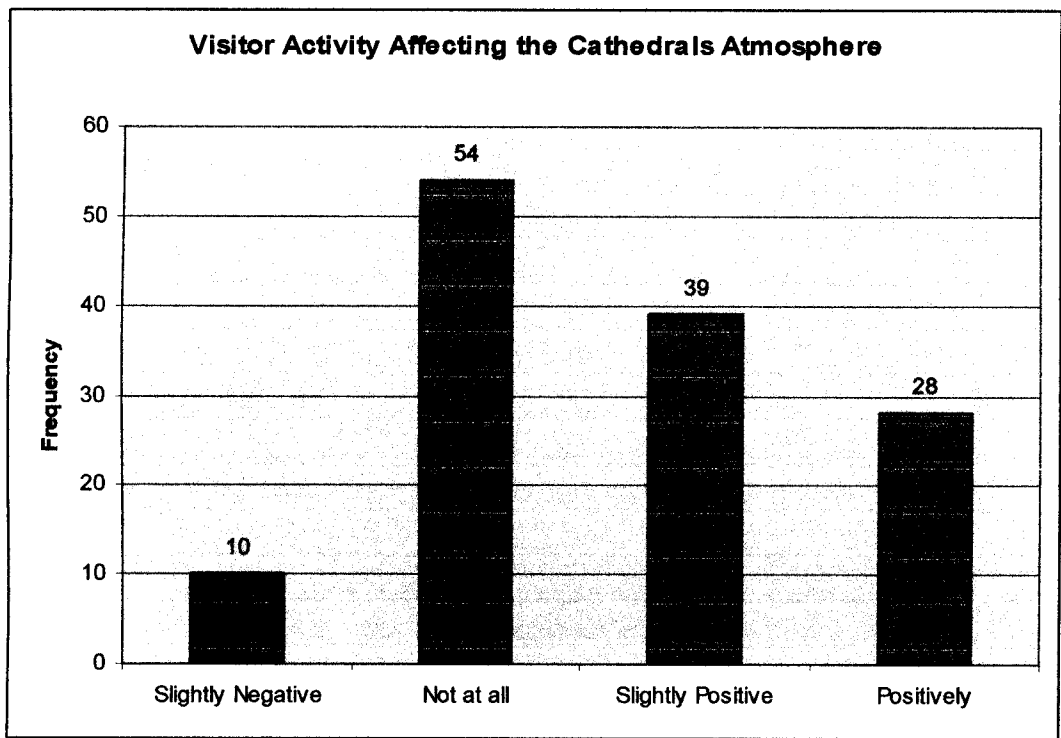
The findings give an insight into visitor behaviour by segment; -

- The ‘heritage tourist’ was the highest in frequency in both ‘1-2’ and ‘3-5’ category.
- The 6 or more category was again dominated by the ‘Heritage tourist’ with the ‘Historical/ Architectural Interest’ significantly lower.

4.0 Visitor Activity

The necessity for the Chester Cathedral is to ensure that it does not deviate from its core purpose as a place of worship. Respondents were asked whether the visitor activity affected the religious/ spiritual atmosphere within the Cathedral. The results were overwhelmingly positive with 92.4% (Fig. 4A) of the sample answering either ‘not affecting it at all’ or ‘positive’ in some way.

Fig. 4



This reinforces findings from both VAQAS Report (page 9) and the interview with ██████████ (Operation Manager Orient Express) where it was pointed out that one of Chester Cathedral’s selling points is its tranquil atmosphere, whereas at York Minster the spiritual feeling is somewhat lost due to visitor activity. It could be said that Chester Cathedral are delivering the fundamentals of a Religious site whilst maintaining the synergistic balance between its core purpose and commercial activities. However, the question must be asked at what point does the Chester Cathedral become too busy and what is its capacity before the atmosphere is affected?

Moreover, the current positioning in the local market produced equally positive findings, when asked how Chester Cathedral compared to other tourists attractions;-

- 48.9% said it was ‘good’.
- 33.6% ‘excellent’.
- 4.6% said ‘average’.
- None of the sample population answered ‘poor’.

Therefore at a macro-level the satisfaction levels are strong and further reinforce the point that the correct balance between core purpose and commercial activity is being achieved.

4.1 Welcome and Arrival Information

The first impression of the Cathedral is imperative to the whole visitor experience; this particular area received positive feedback from the VAQAS report and again was marked “good-excellent” in this study, although there are still areas that require improvement; -

- 39.6% said the welcome was ‘good’.
- 31.5% rated it ‘excellent’.
- 16.2% of the sample answering ‘average’.
- 12.6% saying it was poor.

In addition to this, each visitor was asked to use a word to describe the welcome, which on the whole were positive with the words such as ‘Friendly’ and ‘Warm’ being most commonly used. However, due to the fact that 29.5% of the sample answered the welcome was poor-average some feedback was negative with 20% of the sample that had been around the Cathedral answering it was ‘non-existent’ and ‘Off-putting’.

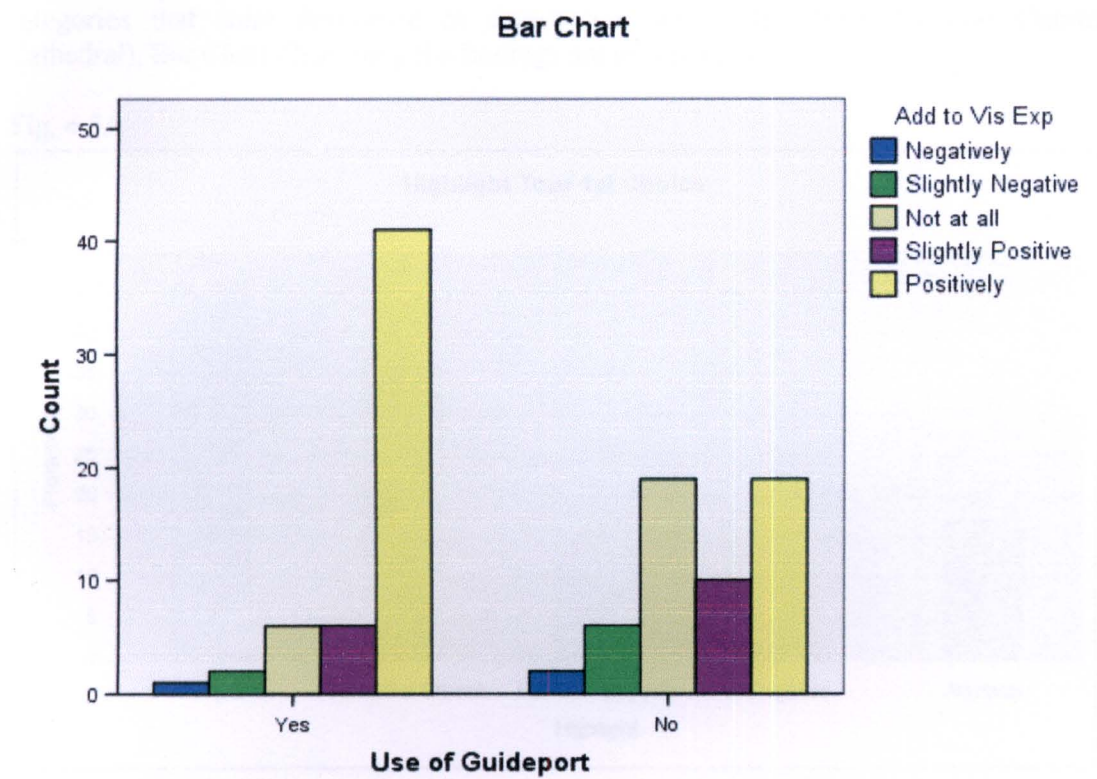
The findings of the arrival information at the admissions desk was very similar to the welcome in terms of positive feedback and again such findings provide solid foundations for the visitor experience, (for the Frequency graph please see Appendix Fig.5A). However, whilst conducting the research it was noted by the author that a significant number of visitor seemed to get confused as to where the entrance for the tour or even where the admissions desk was. Although this could be regarded as a signage issue, its impact on the delivery of arrival information warrants the need for it to be highlighted and discussed further. Perhaps those at the admissions desk could greet visitors proactively instead of waiting for the visitor to approach them which could lead to less confusion.

4.2 Delivery of the tour

The following section will be looking at two key aspects of the delivery of the tour. Firstly, did the visitor use the Guideport (Audio Tour) service or walk around in the traditional way. Secondly, whether this choice added to their visitor experience in a positive or negative way.

The sample population was split 50% that used the Guideport service and 50% that took the traditional option. Fig.5 Shows the Use of Guideport/ or not and whether that choice added to the visitor experience.

Fig. 5



An overwhelming 83.9% believed that by choosing to use the Guideport service their visitor experience was affected in a positive way (including both ‘positive’ and ‘slightly positive’). In addition to this, when the visitor was asked why this was so positive 65% answered it was due to the ‘in-depth information available’, that included setting the historical context and but also having the option to get further information through the magnify option. Whilst of those 33.9% who adopted the traditional approach half believed the not using the Guideport port made no difference to the visitor experience and the other half believed it positively added to it

Also, whilst conducting research on the 07/07/07 there was 6 cases where visitors could not make use of the Guideport service and had to walk around the Cathedral the traditional way. In each case they felt that by not using the Guideport service had negatively affected their visitor experience, also in a separate instance one gentleman who suffered from dyslexia highly praised the fact the Audio-tour catered for his needs.

4.3 Highlight of the Tour

The visitors were asked to rank in order their top 3 highlights from the tour from various categories that were developed in conjunction with (Operations Director Chester Cathedral), Bar Chart illustrating the findings are as follows;-

Fig. 4.3A

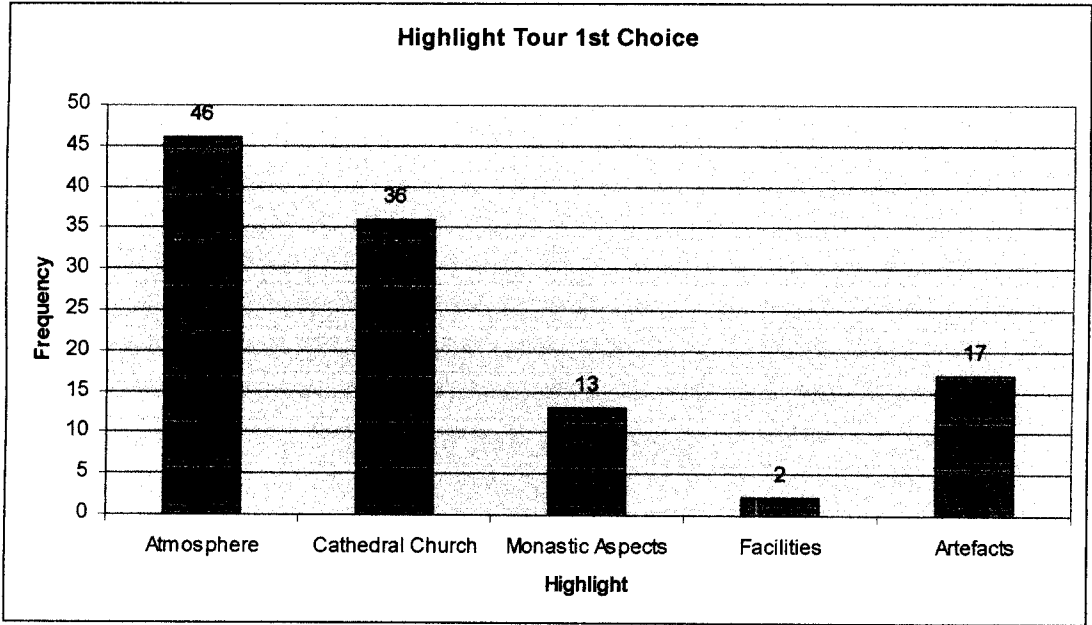


Fig. 4.3B

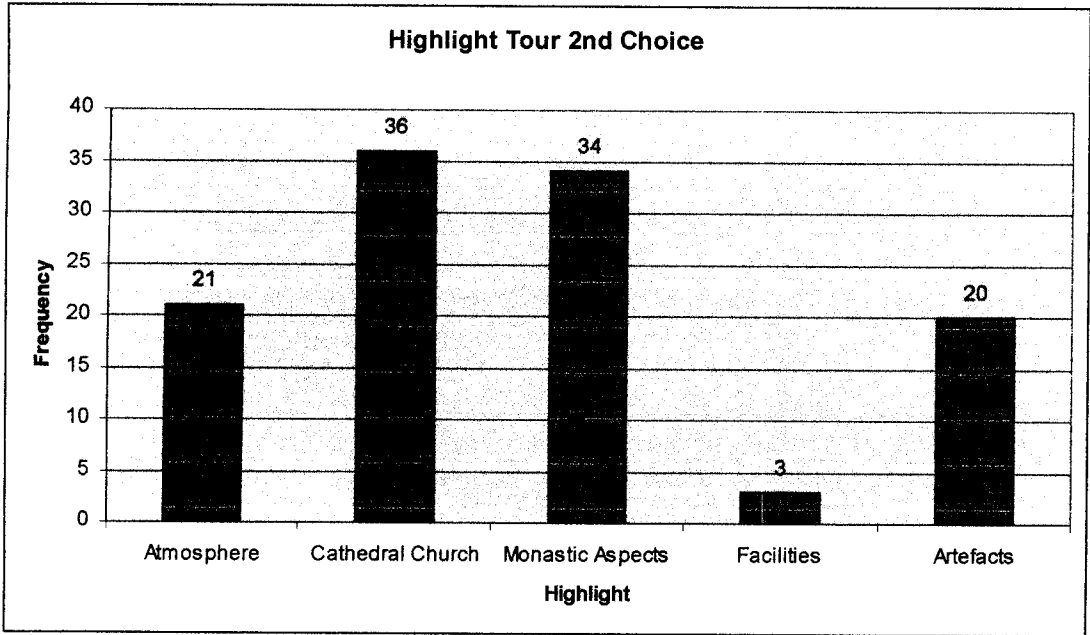
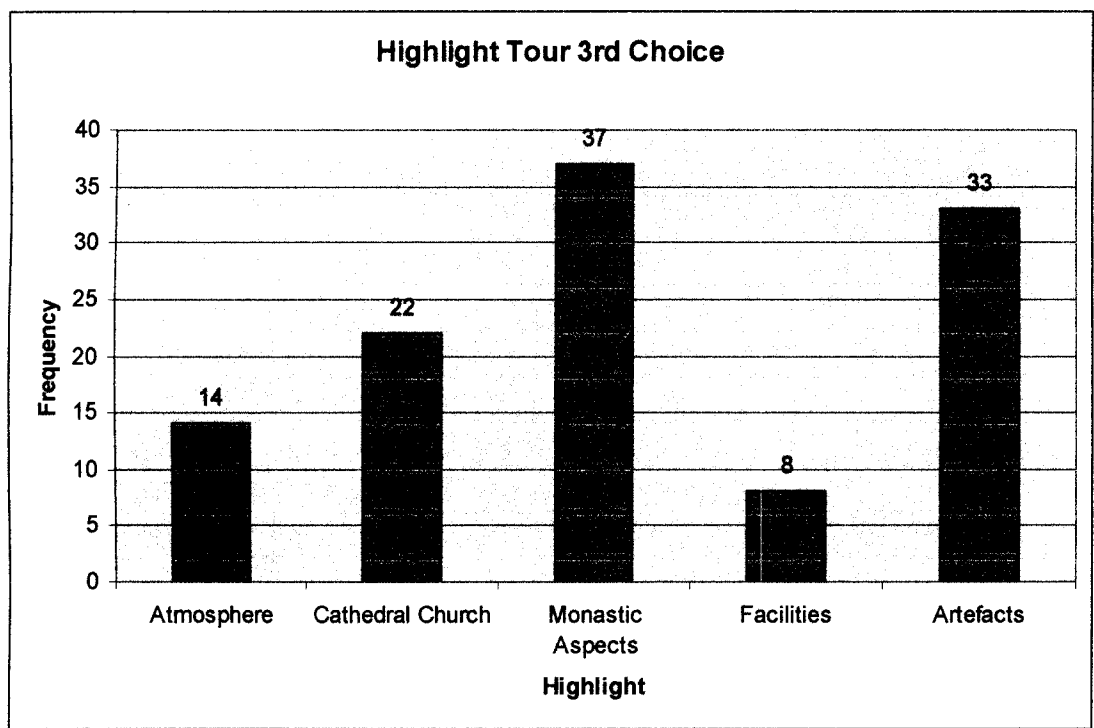


Fig. 4.3C



The results indicated that; -

- 40% of the sample regarded the ‘Atmosphere’ (Religious activities/ Spiritual tranquillity) as their 1st choice.
- The ‘Cathedral Church’ also had a significant proportion with 31%, these two aspects of the tour were in line with the findings from the interview stage.

This reiterates the earlier points made that its core purpose is not being affected and in fact the major factor in adding value to the tour and could be regarded as a unique selling point. These findings are aligned heavily with B’ policy on creating an atmosphere with the Cathedral going about its daily duties, there were numerous cases where by visitors commented on such things e.g. the Orchestra or Choir practicing.

- The 2nd Choice from the tour was less conclusive with 32% of visitors making the ‘Cathedral Church’ their second choice. However a close secondary choice was the ‘Monastic Aspects’ with 29%.
- Finally, the visitor’s 3rd choice with 33% was the ‘Monastic Aspects’, similar to the previous point this was far from conclusive as a secondary choice with 29% was the Cathedral’s ‘Artefacts’.

However, it is important to note that although the 2nd and 3rd Choices were not definitive these results can be used as a starting point in the process for future promotion research into unique selling points within the Cathedral. Essentially these areas within the Cathedral are key to unlocking value and creating a sustainable competitive advantage, most importantly the ‘atmosphere’ which is an intangible asset and was the definitive highlight of the tour overall.

4.4 Price

The results of those who had paid to go around the Cathedral were positive, with 80% saying they had paid. In order to establish whether or not the current pricing strategy was in line with the visitor experience, visitors were asked to circle a range of prices to essentially identify price range was best inline with their visitor's experience. The results were again positive; -

- 66% price range of £3- 4.
- 18% price range of £5-6
- 11% price range of £1-2.

This would indicate that the pricing strategy fits WA Shearing criteria; ensure that the pricing structure suits the tour- "that is an attraction that people will be happy to pay for within the framework of the tour" (Source: Interview with ██████████ Operations Manager WA Shearing).

Further analysis into those who disagreed with the pricing policy and did not pay to go around, produced interestingly that 65% believed that the current admissions price was in-line with their visitor experience! These findings can be seen in Appendix Fig. 7A.

4.5 Access

The access into the Cathedral was a key issue raised by both ██████████ (Operations Manager Orient Express) and ██████████ (WA Shearing Operations Manager UK), as the foundations to any visitor attraction. The findings can be summarised by the following:-

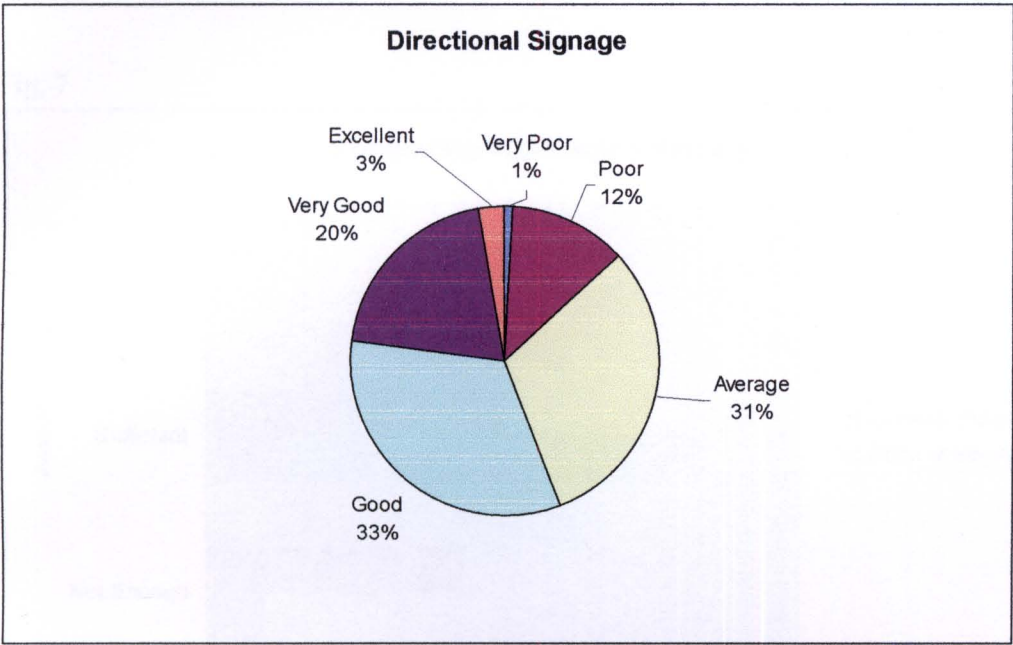
- **Ease of Access:** which included getting into the Cathedral received feedback of good-excellent, with 44% rating it as good, 35% as excellent and 16% as average.
- **Disability Access:** due to the nature of the research there was a restricted number of respondents 14 in total, the feedback was rather inconclusive with the majority split between 50% rating it average and 42.9% excellent.
- **Public Facilities:** received 67% rating it as average, the main cause for this was due to the fact that the signs by the admissions desk stated male and female toilets were by the refectory however when male visitors attempt to use them they find out there are only female and had to head back to the entrance.

5.0 Signage

A key issue from the preparatory meetings and interviews was that signage needed to be addressed within the Cathedral research specifically; it can again be split into sub-headings.

5.1 Directional Signage

This covered internal signage within the Cathedral for instance directions to the admissions desk and guideposts that complemented the Guidepost service. Fig.6 shows the findings of how visitors rated the directional signage around the Cathedral; Fig.6



From the respondents that were either ‘complete’ or ‘Cathedral’ types, 63% rated the directional signage as average-good. As a visitor attraction that relies heavily on an effective visitor flow this is slightly more negative. In addition to this having spent 6 days observing the visitor flow there was confusion as to where the admissions desk was, on many occasions the researcher was asked for assistance by visitors mainly down to little directional signage in this area. Also with reference to the Cathedral VAQAS Report that stated some Guidepost had missing numbers this was reflected in the research; although the Guideport added to many visitor’s experience in a positive way, 16% that answered ‘not at all’ and ‘slightly negative’ (Fig. 5) put it down to poor directional signage accompanying the guideposts with no clear numbering system.

5.2 Cathedral Tour Signage

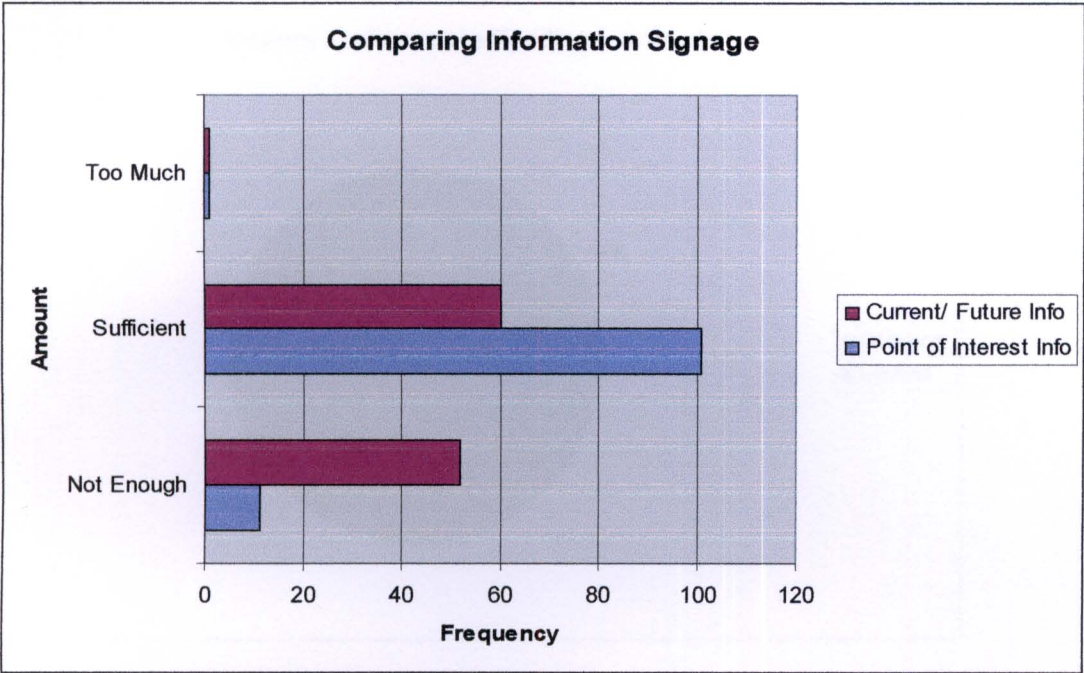
This focused on the signage throughout the Cathedral tour, visitors were again asked to rate how well key areas were signed for instance when visitor were looking at features did they know they were i.e. the Cloisters, Chapels etc. The results were very similar to the directional signage firmly sitting in the average-good;

- 47% rating good
- 31% rating average.
- 12% rated it excellent
- 10% rated it as poor.

5.2 Information Signage

This section focused on information signage whilst on the tour did the visitor have enough information about that point of interest. Also, was there enough information about current or future events. Fig. 7 shows the results of comparing the information signage; -

Fig. 7



The findings for the point interest were conclusive; -

- 89% rating the amount of information as ‘sufficient’, this would suggest this particular area is performing well.

Information about future or current events was less conclusive with; -

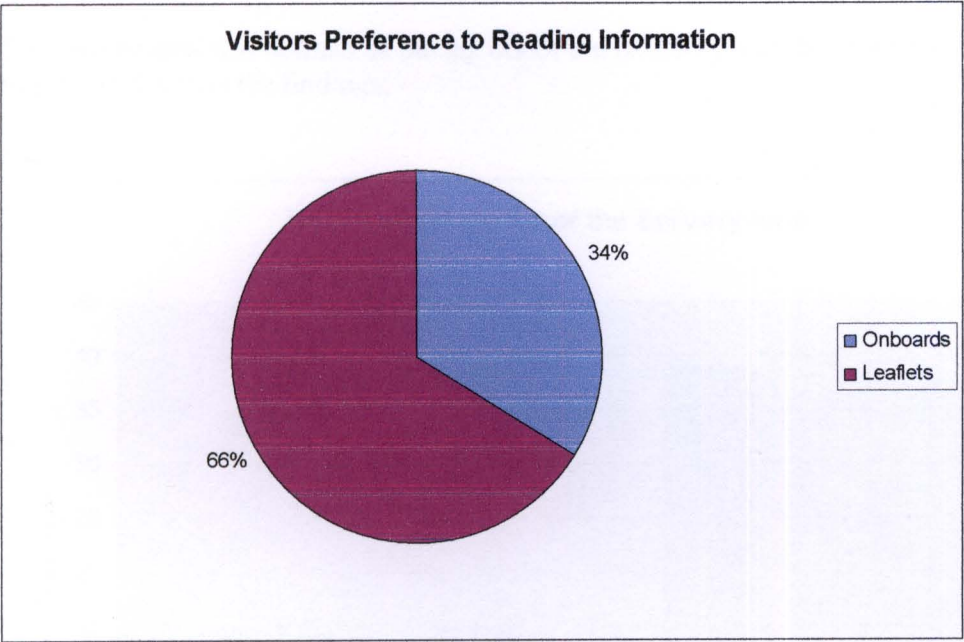
- 46% rating it as ‘not enough’
- 53% rating ‘sufficient’.

Many visitors noted that it would be useful to have the notice board that clearly separated out visitor and congregation activities this can be directly related to the VAQAS report (page 3). In addition to this although this population of the sample were not local those that answered ‘not enough’ did not even notice signage information about current/ future events, which could lead to a lost opportunity in terms of promoting future events such as the Mystery Plays and a chance to improve retention rates.

5.3 Information whilst on tour

Visitors that had been on the tour where asked would they prefer to read information on boards or have an accompanying leaflet. Fig.8 shows the results; -

Fig.8



Of the sample population that had been around the Cathedral 66% were in favour of an accompanying leaflet, as oppose to 34% reading information on boards. This finding further reinforces a point raised by ~~the study~~ (Operation Manager Orient Express) that a way to enhance the tour would have a leaflet that visitors could take around with them; Perhaps with a guide map and brief information allowing the visitor to reflect on their experience at a later date.

6.0 Refectory

Over the duration of the research it soon became apparent that a high percentage of visitors that were going around the Cathedral were going into the refectory. This can be shown in Section 2.1: Fig.1, out of the whole sample population 55% were going around the Cathedral and not using the refectory.

This must be contextualised as a significant amount of visitors (57%) gave the reasoning that they had already eaten or had time constraints as the main cause for not visiting the Refectory.

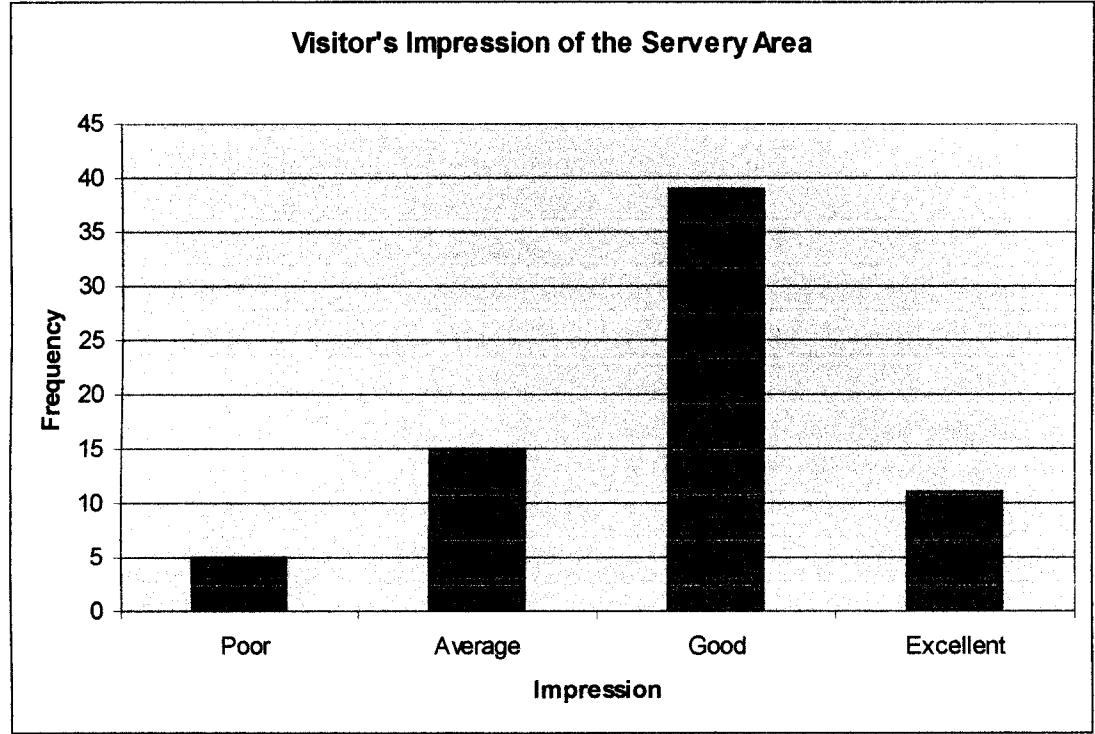
However, this leaves 43% of visitor that did not go into the refectory with most common reason given that 'they did not know where it was'. This could be considered below average conversion rate leading back to other points made about directional signage and visitor flow. Visitors were exiting the tour where they had entered which led to confusion; the following recommendation **requires further investigation and a feasibility study;** to see whether the exit point from the tour could be moved to the disabled ramp by the Refectory. By addressing the visitor flow and leading the 43% who did not use the

catering facilities, to exit directly by the Refectory entrance. The recommendation has the potential to improve this moderate conversion rate and capture the potential the Refectory holds in terms of revenue streams. In addition, it would also led visitors through the gift shop to exit via the Cathedral's main entrance/ exit.

6.1 Servery Area

The servery area was defined as the lay out of the refectory and the visitors were asked to rate it, Fig.9 shows the findings; -

Fig. 9

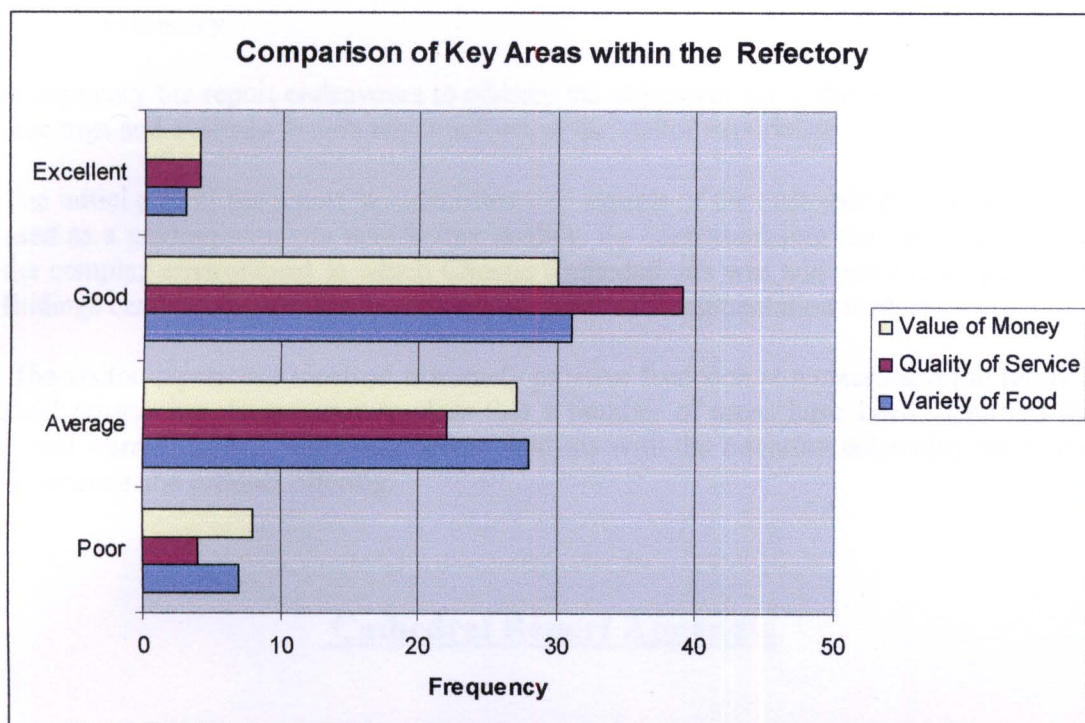


The servery area received a positive response that sits within good category with 55%, in addition the visitors were asked what word would they use to describe their first impressions with 'unique/ atmosphere' being most commonly used. However, there was some negative feedback of those who rated the servery area as 'poor' or 'average' 17 stated that their first impression was the layout was 'functional', 'WI meeting' and 'School dinners'.

6.2 Evaluation of Refectory

Using findings from the interviews and the KNOWAT template, this evaluation took into account key areas of the Refectory and included variety of food, quality of service and value for money Fig. 10 shows the comparison of these key areas; -

Fig. 10



The overall findings are similar in terms of feedback and sit within the average-good bracket in terms of satisfaction levels. The following focus on key areas; -

- **Variety of Food:** From the sample 44% felt the variety was good, although there are positives to be taken from this, 40% felt that it was only average. This would indicate there is room for improvement, however due to restrictions within the Refectory (size, lack of resources); this analysis could be developed further.
- **Quality of Service:** Received positive feedback with 56% saying it was good. Some negative feedback regarded the self-service was unclear and perhaps further instructions from staff would be more helpful, these views contributed to a proportion of the 31.2 % of 'averages'.
- **Value for Money:** Again received good-average feedback, with 43.5 % rating it 'good' and 39.2% rating it average. However, this was closely linked to the variety of food some visitors felt that a deli-sandwich bar would offer more in terms variety and value-for money.

6.3 Hot Food Menu

This section focused specifically on the times hot food would be served within the Cathedral, currently it is served 11.45am- 2pm and visitors were asked whether they would prefer to see it open longer. The findings were conclusive in favour of longer serving time with 72.5 % answering yes. From those 50 respondents that answered 'yes';

- The majority of 54% wanted to 11- 4pm.
- 24% wanted to see the hours extended to 11-3pm.

Much of the feedback to extend the hot food time were visitors that had been on trips all day and had arrived after 2pm but there was no hot food available, even a small snack e.g. soup that could tide them over until dinner.

7.0 Summary

In summary the report endeavours to address the objectives set in the various preparatory meetings and evaluate factors which influence the visitor experience.

The initial part of the report has identified key aspects of the customer profile that can be used as a guiding structure into further studies. By contextualising the visitor behaviour, the complex environment in which Chester Cathedral sits was addressed and again these findings can be used as the foundations into additional segmentation analysis.

The visitor experience received extremely positive feedback at a macro-level in terms of local positioning. However it is clear that a number of areas have been identified that would warrant further study and deeper analysis with the intention enhancing the visitor experience and product offering.

Cathedral Report Appendix

Fig. 2 Age of Visitors

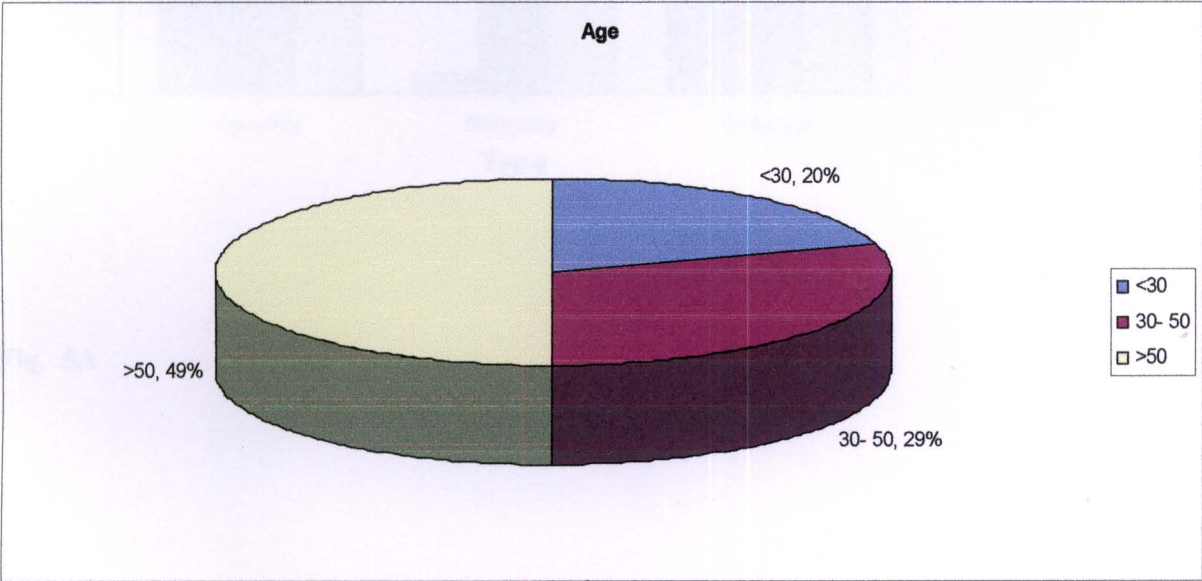


Fig. 3A **Frequency of Type by Age Bracket**

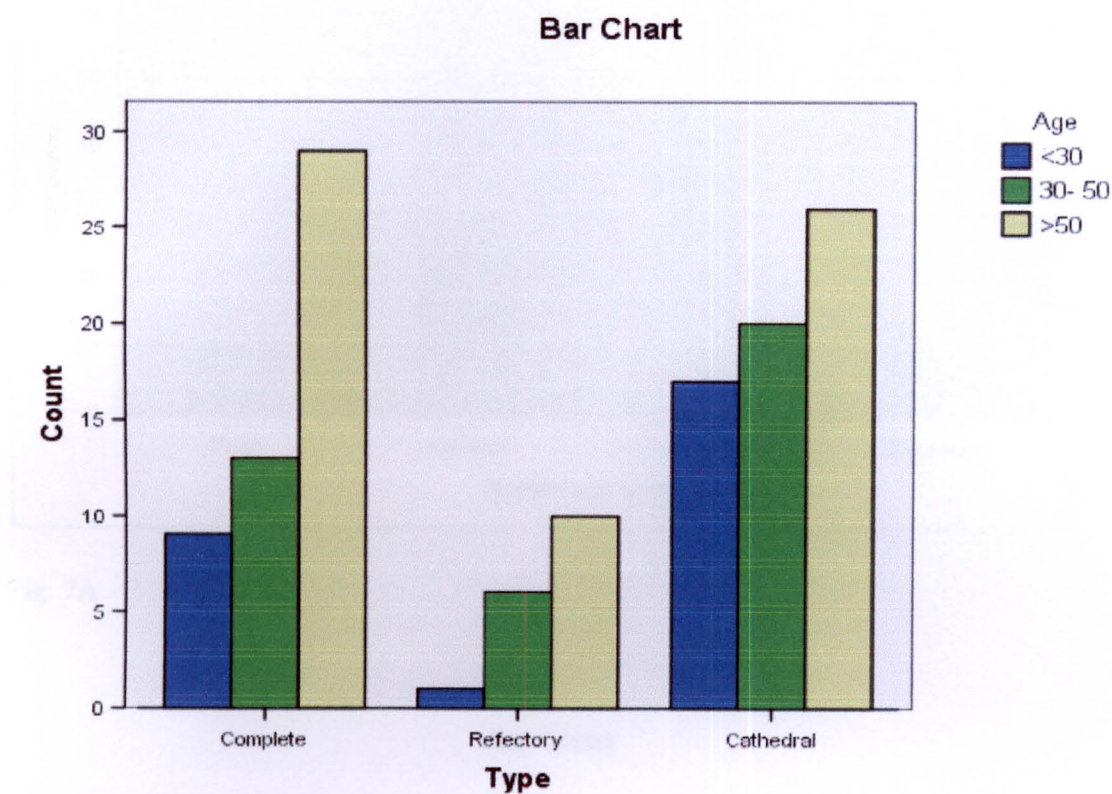


Fig. 5A

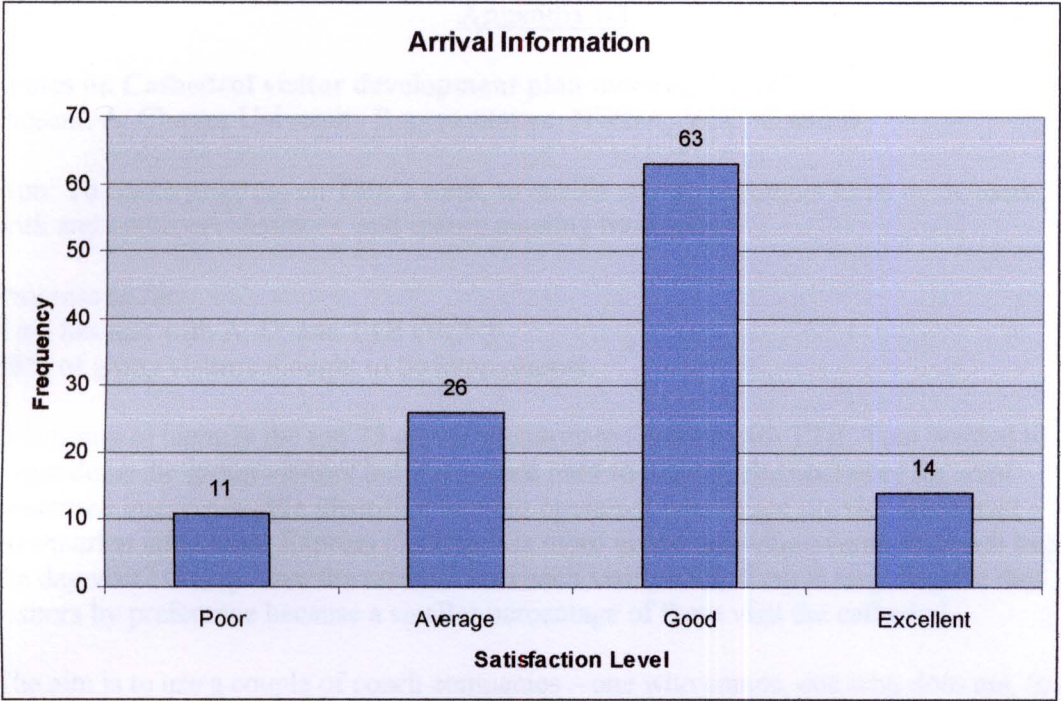
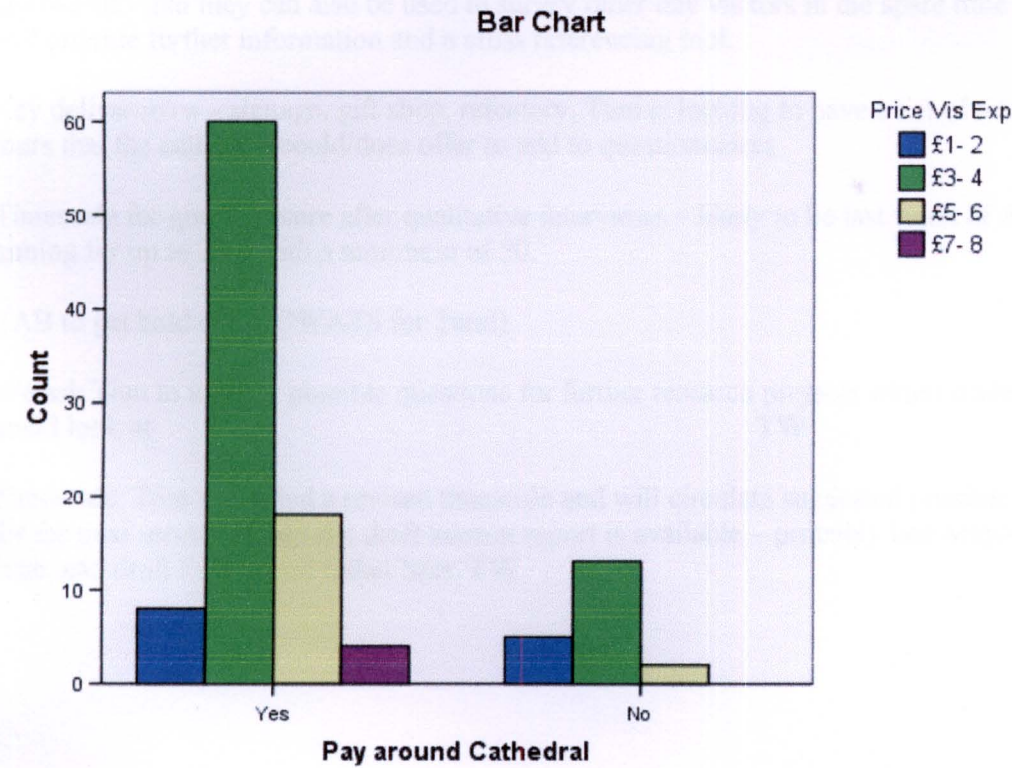


Fig. 7A



Appendix B2

Notes on Cathedral visitor development plan meeting 27.3.07

Present: A, Chester University Representative, NWDA, VCC, C and B

Aim: To check progress on Tom's work, to enable any amendments to be made/assist with any contacts/references, and ensure meeting timetable.

Progress so far:

Tom has met with A, D, and TTE (VCC)

98% of group visitors thought to be international.

D is trying to identify the top 25 group operators to Chester with TTE. Tom wanted to target domestic group visitors but it has been hard to identify the operators for semi structured interviews. We identified two big operators who might provide a contrast – Newmarket and Orient Express (?). Which is more important – the overnight coach trip or the day visit? G may have the research on coach visitors too. Tom is targeting the day visitors by preference because a smaller percentage of these visit the cathedral.

The aim is to use a couple of coach companies – one who comes, one who does not, to find out what they want, to shape the customer questionnaire. Are people coming for the heritage attraction, or the add ons? Peter offered KNOWATs for the customer survey, and will investigate whether a couple of students could be hired to do the surveys.

PS

The best time for them to do this will probably be as coach visitors get their refreshments afterwards – but they can also be used to survey other day visitors in the spare time which will provide further information and a cross referencing tool..

Key deliverables – signage, gift shop, refectory, Tom is looking to have a list of 5 top tours that the cathedral could/does offer to add to questionnaires

Timescale for questionnaire after qualitative interviews – likely to be last week of April – aiming for up to 200, with a minimum of 50.

(AB to get hold of KNOWATS for Tara!)

We ask Tom to identify possible questions for further research projects which students could look at.

TW

Timescale: Tom presented a revised timescale and will circulate suggested possible dates for the next meeting when the draft interim report is available – probably late May/early June, and draft final report rather later. **TW**

Appendix C1 Section 1

Key vignettes from various interviews conducted indicating the structure but also demonstrating the flexibility of the data collection technique.

Below is an **example** of the some of the questions in the overview used in the ‘pool; -

1. Purpose of the interview:

- **The broad focus of the interview: refer to the research proposal.**
- **Using the data to contribute towards the questionnaire design.**
- **Why the participant has been chosen- everything will be confidential and I will get the transcripts to be signed-off.**
- **In insight viewpoint form different roles within the Cathedral.**

2. What is your job title, and please could you briefly explain what it entails?

3. How long have you worked at the Cathedral?

4. How would you describe the organisational structure of the Cathedral taking into taking into account both the religious and commercial activities?

5. Do these activities ever influence each other? N/P?

6. How would you evaluate Chester’s present visitor economy?

7. To what extent do you feel this influences the Cathedral’s commercial success?

8. This is a very open question, but how would you define the “visitor experience”? Brand image, customer satisfaction....etc

9. With that in mind, do you feel the Cathedral positions itself effectively in Chester’s heritage market?

10. Specifically related to the Cathedral, what do you regard as the most important factors that contribute toward the visitor experience?

11. With that in mind, do you feel the Cathedral positions itself effectively in Chester’s heritage market?

12. What generally tends to be the busiest time of the year in terms of visitors? And coach tours?

Appendix C1 Section 2

The following vignettes are examples of questions and responses taken from the transcripts of a selection of the interviews conducted for this study. It demonstrates the flexibility of this approach as the interviewer often asked further probing questions and could adapt such questions to different context.

Interview conducted 11/04/07 with D at Chester Cathedral

(Structured Question) *How would you describe the organisational structure of the Cathedral taking into account both the religious and commercial activities?*

Changing, I suppose simply because demands change... visitors demands and visitors expectations, but also the Cathedral expectations of what visitors can provide and to some extent making sure that we stick to our primary purpose and don't get to diverted down other paths or other ways of thinking I suppose.

(Probing Question) *What would be the primary purpose?*

The primary purpose of the Cathedral very broadly spreading the word of god, it religious and heritage I think if we loose site of that we could just as easily be Alton Towers. Which would have a completely different way of thinking.

(Probing Question) *Would the religious activities and the commercial activities stem from that?*

Precisely, I suppose what sets Cathedrals apart from so many others places is including historic places... is that it is still be used for its original purpose, in the sense they were built as Churches and that's what they are and if you loose site of what your there for.

Interview conducted 09/05/07 with E at Crewe Offices.

8. (Structured Question) *This is a very open question, but how would you define the "visitor experience"?*

Brand image is quite important because we do Durham Cathedral as well If your going to take anybody who goes on the Orient Express it has to be somewhere that is fairly spectacular. Because of whom we are, because we are Orient Express and not just a train charter company which there's lots of private trains out there. Then it has to do with our brand and it has to be somebody that would be compatible for Orient Express to visit.

(Probing Question) *To fit your brand image and style*

Wherever we go it has to be of a high standard.

(Probing Question) *It strikes me just from your grand tour that you're very strict on time for it as needs to run smoothly, that as you say is the key ingredient.*

We are always restricted to time so we have to try and work on that between two of us. So it doesn't mean that it is something that they rush into and rush out of. It's got to be a tour or a visit to somewhere that they can actual experience rather than just a whistle stop tour that was the cathedral, that's such a thing you know.

RESEARCHER: BOLD

INTERVIEWEE: NOT BOLD.

Appendix D1 Section 1

Transcript analysis example; -

D1.

5. Would you say these activities ever influence each other? N/P?

Oh indeed, I think in the main positively and there are times when obviously worship **must take priority**. We had a little example on the 23rd Dec when we had booked G4 very close to all the serious worship of Christmas but the clergy relented and allowed us to do it. Sadly G4 have withdrawn the concert as they have parted company so this particular problem no longer exists but it could have been quite difficult for everyone.

I was just trying to capture the complexity of the cathedral.

6. How would you evaluate Chester's present visitor economy?

GROWING. It's growing with the inception of organisations like Visit Chester and Cheshire under the umbrella of CWTB and with a much better structure coming out of Chester City Council. I am really quite impressed with where they are going with **their tourism strategy** and they are supporting a new organisation called Chester Festivals of which the Cathedral is a part and so I really do think the visitor economy is growing. I'm on the city centre place-marketing group representing the Cathedral and it's been a fascinating experience listening to how it's *all* developing and how seriously they take the **promotion of the city, which includes the Cathedral.**

③ visitor economy -
growing -
positioning

7. To what extent do you feel this influences the Cathedral's commercial success?

It doesn't *at the moment* influence it enough but *hopefully it will do so in the future* because of the kind of work I am doing. My post gives me a presence at meetings where I represent the Cathedral and Chester Mystery plays (which is my other hat) *and I am therefore able to pick up on most things that are happening in the city and I have the opportunity to ensure that the cathedral is involved and included if it wishes to be so.*

① context -
commercial
visiting
not even

So you're seen to have a key role in a sustainable future? And something that I have picked up during my research that the Cathedral's has not been sold as the focal point within the city? Would you agree with that?

Yes I would

① context -
place of
community

That the rough diamonds potential is becoming apparent and what it can draw.

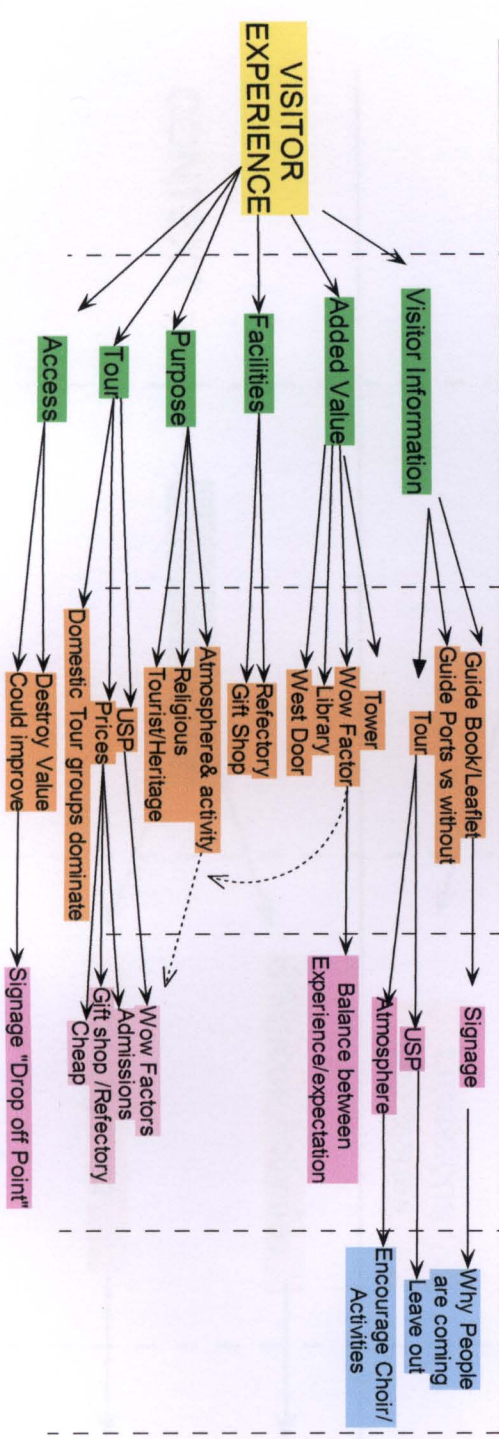
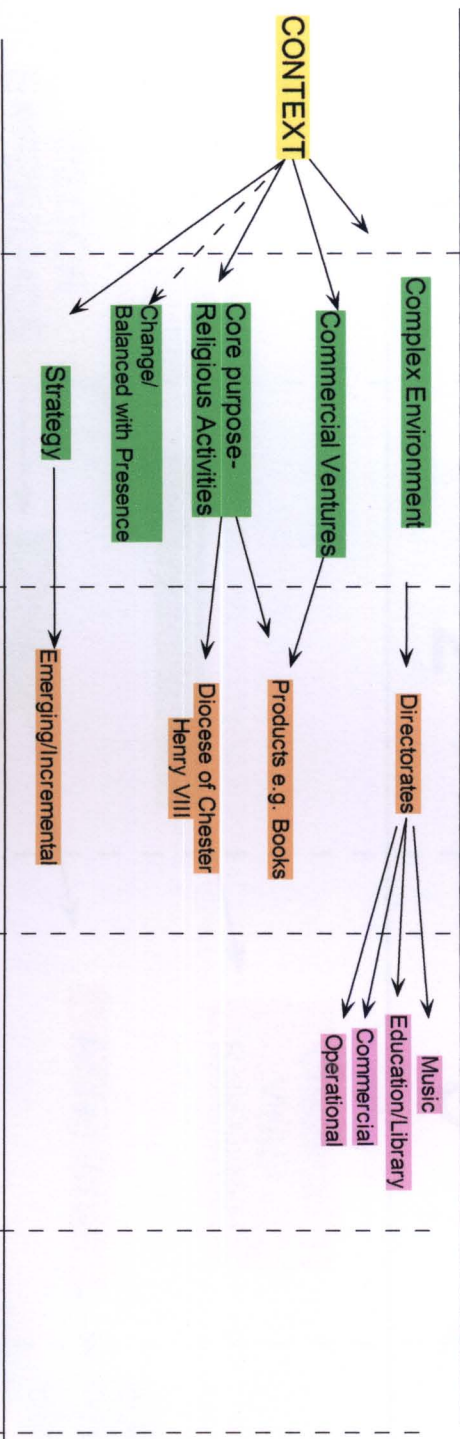
Oh yes, and I think it is because we are now opening our doors much more to events and **encouraging people to come inside and look at things and be in the Cathedral other than to worship.** Obviously they have to be sympathetic with our mission but we have all kinds of things planned from Prom Praise concerts in the nave to fashion shows in the cloisters

interest
use of
word!

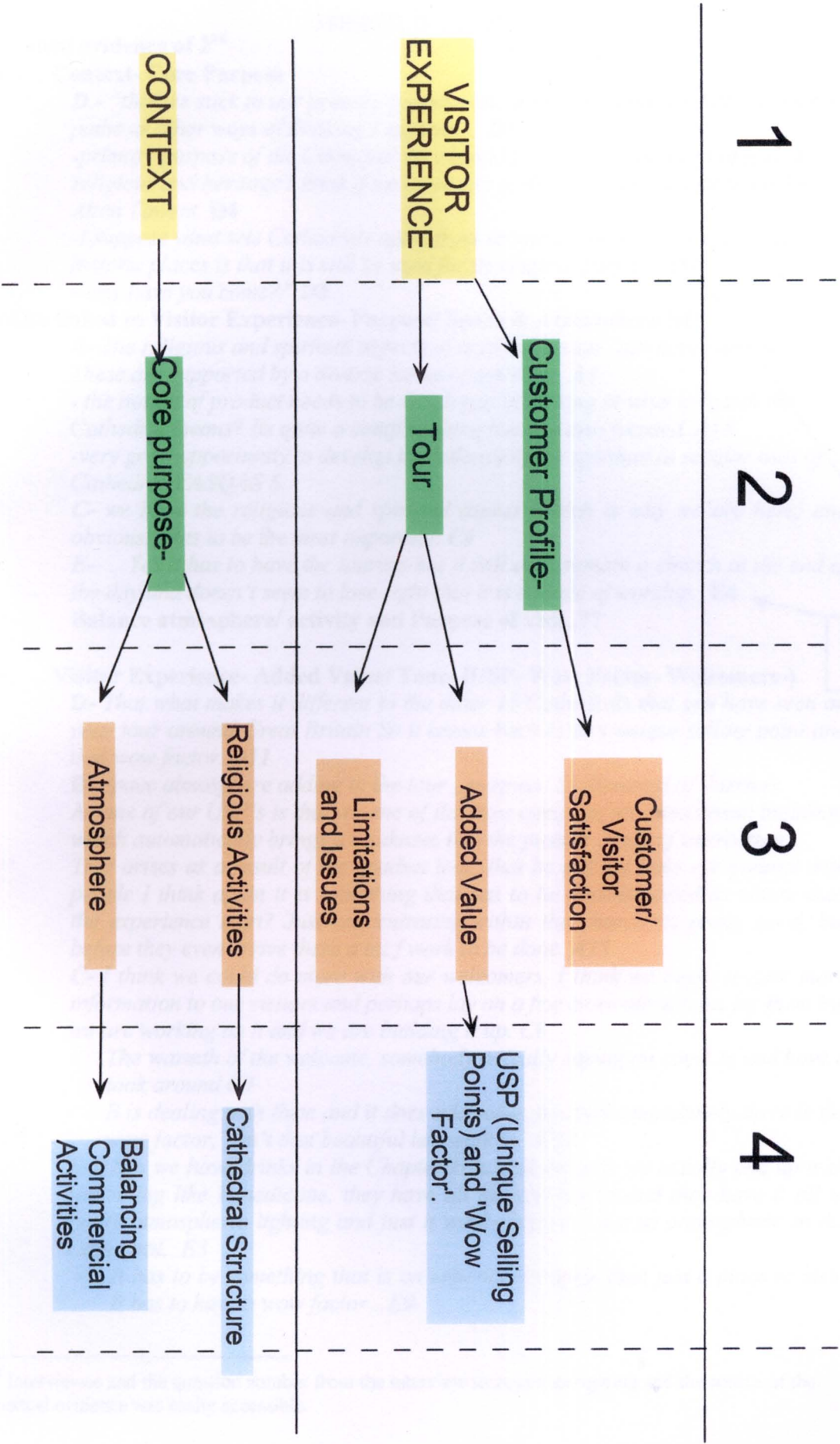
That's really interesting, that would say that in itself the groups and them being the focal point, would you say that those events have derived from such relationships like Chester festivals and that has been a catalyst?

Section 2

1 2 3 4 5



Appendix D2-Section 2 Merged 2nd Phase Categorization: Coding Relationships used for Meta-Matrix



Appendix D2 Section 2

Textual evidence of 2nd

• Context- Core Purpose

D - "that we stick to our primary purpose and don't get to diverted down other paths or other ways of thinking I suppose... D4

-primary purpose of the Cathedral very broadly spreading the word of god, it religious and heritage I think if we loose site of that we could just as easily be Alton Towers. D4

-I suppose what sets Cathedrals apart from so many others places is including historic places is that it is still be used for its original purpose. D4¹

- why have you come?" D8

(Also linked to Visitor Experience- Purpose/ Space & Atmosphere B1)

A- The religious and spiritual aspects of activity remain our core purpose. These are supported by a diverse range of activities. A4

- the notion of product needs to be developed in looking at what on earth the Cathedral means? Its quite a complex thing but it is also focused. A15

-very good opportunity to develop the balance of the spiritual to secular uses of Cathedral VASQAS 5.

C- we have the religious and spiritual aspect (which is why we are here) and obviously has to be the most important. C4

E- . Yes it has to have the tourists but it still does remain a church at the end of the day and doesn't seem to lose sight that it is a place of worship. E4

Balance atmosphere/ activity and Purpose of visit..??

Source
Code

• Visitor Experience- Added Value/ Tour- (USP- Wow Factor- Welcomers-)

D- That what makes it different to the other 15 Cathedrals that you have seen on your tour around Great Britain So it comes back to that unique selling point and that wow factor. D11

B- Space atmosphere adding to the tour... purpose! S1 Removal of Barriers.

A- one of our USP's is that we one of the most complete set of monastic buildings which automatically brings a weakness into the picture ...lack of interaction That arises as a result of the headset tour, that he did not have eye contact with people I think again it is something that has to be deconstructed as where does the experience start? Just concentrating within the church its pretty good, but before they even arrive there a lot f work to be done. A15

C- I think we could do more with our welcomers, I think we ought to give more information to our visitors and perhaps lay on a few more attractions for them but we are working on it and we are building it up. C8

- The warmth of the welcome, somebody actually saying do come in and have a look around C9

- B is dealing with them and it does add value, because immediately there is the wow factor, 'isn't that beautiful lets walk in'. C12

E- Then we have drinks in the Chapter House at the side we usually end up with something like Benedictine, they have all the candles lit and they have it all in really atmospheric lighting and just it works superb... it's so atmospheric in the Cathedral. E3

- It has to be something that is an experience rather than just a place to visit. It has to have a wow factor... E9

¹ Interviewee and the question number from the interview to ensure navigating and the source of the textual evidence was easily accessible.

Appendix E1- Section 1

Demonstrates the first draft of Question 6 including authors notes; -

Q6. Do you think the visitor activity affects the spiritual/ religious atmosphere within the Cathedral ?

Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree
1	2	3	4

If agree...Positively or Negatively?

Referring to the summarised qualitative stage of the research (2nd Categorisation.doc) it has become clear the Cathedral must not deviate from its core purpose as a religious site. Therefore it would be very useful to get the perspective of the "tourist" and ensure its achieving its core purpose, but equally in doing so adding value to the visitor experience.

Piloted on 28/06/07 with using four answers... the only question that caused confusion was the wording of this one. Changed it to a likert scales positive to negative?

Demonstrates the final version used; -

Q6. Do you think the visitor activity affects the spiritual/ religious atmosphere within the Cathedral ?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Negatively				Positively			

Appendix E1- Section 2

Section 2: Demonstrates the full questionnaire conducted for the Cathedral Project, please note only a selection (in bold) have been used in the dissertation study.

Chester Cathedral Customer Survey

Please circle your answers

Q1. Gender

- a. Male
- b. Female

Q2. Age

- a. < 30
- b. 30- 50
- c. 50 >

Q3. Length of stay?

- a. <1
- b. 1-2 hours
- c. 3 or more hours

Q4. **Within the last two years, how many British Cathedrals have you visited?**

- a. 1- 2 (1)
- b. 3- 5 (2)
- c. 6 or more (3)

The special treatment was that the various answers had the following value in variable view in SPSS;-

- 1.00= '1-2'
- 2.00= '3-5'
- 3.00= '6 or more'

Q5. **Purpose of visit?**

- a. **Heritage Tourist** (1)
- b. **Religious/ Spiritual** (2)
- c. **Historical / Architectural Interest** (3)
- d. **Other(please note)...e.g. eating** (4)

The special treatment was that the various answers had the following value in variable view SPSS;-

- 1.00= 'Heritage Tourist'
- 2.00= 'Religious/ Spiritual'
- 3.00= 'Historical/ Architectural Interest'
- 4.00= 'Other'

Please note the 'others' were analysed by doing a frequency of the most commonly used answers.

Q6. Do you think the visitor activity affects the spiritual/ religious atmosphere within the Cathedral ?

1---2---3---4---5---6---7---8
Negatively Positively

Could be regarded as an ordinal variable and the value of each needed to be converted into firstly how the likert scale was measured, then converted into a named variable;

1-2 = 1.00 1.00= Negatively
3 = 2.00 2.00= Slightly Negative
4-5 = 3.00 3.00= Not at all
6 = 4.00 4.00= Slightly Positive
7-8 = 5.00 5.00= Positively

Q7. Have you been around the Cathedral?
a. Yes
b. No (Go to Q22)

Q8. How does the Cathedral compare to other tourist attractions in Chester?
Poor Average Good Excellent
1 2 3 4

Q9. When entering the Cathedral was the welcome to your satisfaction?
Poor Average Good Excellent
1 2 3 4

What word/s would you use to describe the welcome?

.....

Q10. What did you think of the arrival information?

Poor Average Good Excellent
1 2 3 4

Q11. Did you use the Guideport (headphone) service?

a. Yes
b. No

Q12. Did this choice add to your visitor experience?

Please O the number closest to your evaluation.

1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8

Negatively

Positively

If circled 1-2 or 7-8: How?

The qualitative technique was a simple frequency of the most common words which could then be used to calculate the most used word.

Could be regarded as an ordinal variable and the value of each needed to be converted into firstly how the likert scale was measured, then converted into a named variable;

1-2 = 1.00	1.00= Negatively
3 = 2.00	2.00= Slightly Negative
4-5 = 3.00	3.00= Not at all
6 = 4.00	4.00= Slightly Positive
7-8 = 5.00	5.00= Positively

Q13. Of the following what would you regard the highlight of the tour? Please rank your top 3 in the space provided.

a. Atmosphere:	Religious activities/ Spiritual ambience/ tranquillity	[]
-----------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------	------------

b. Cathedral Church: Nave/ Quire/ Chapel []

c. Monastic Aspects: Cloisters/ Chapter House/ Chapels/ Cloister Gardens

d. Facilities: **Refectory/ Shop/ Exhibition** []

e. Artefacts:	Mosaics/ Stain glass windows/ Cobb web picture/ Memorials	[]
----------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

Due to the nature of a ranking question it was necessary for the variable (Highlight of tour) to be split for instance variable name; 'Hitour1', 'Hitour2' and 'Hitour3'. This allowed for separate frequency to be calculated in order to rank which was most popular. Therefore the following demonstrates how it was each answer was valued so that statistical inferences could be obtained, for 'hitour1', 'hitour2' and 'hitour3' each value was the same:-

1.00= 'Atmosphere'

2.00= 'Cathedral Church'

3.00= 'Monastic Aspects'

4.00= 'Facilities'

5.00= 'Artefacts'

Q14. Did you pay to go around the Cathedral?

- a. Yes
- b. No

Q15. What price range do you perceive to be best in line with your visitor experience at the Cathedral?

- a. £1- 2
- b. £3- 4
- c. £5- 6
- d. £7- 8

Q16. From the following criteria how would rate the access at the Cathedral? Please O the number closest to your evaluation.

Ease of access	1---2---3---4---5---6---7---8
	Poor Excellent

Disability (if applicable) (Physical/ Visual/ Hearing impairment)	1--2---3---4---5---6---7---8
	Poor Excellent

Public Facilities	1---2---3---4---5---6---7---8
	Poor Excellent

Q17. How would you rate the directional signs throughout the Cathedral e.g. guideposts?

Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good	Excellent
1		2	3	4	5
	6				

Q18. During the tour were the various areas of the Cathedral clearly signed e.g. was the Nave clearly signed?

Poor	Average	Good	Excellent
1	2	3	4

Q19. Did you have enough information at each point of interest?

Not enough	Sufficient	Too Much
1	2	3

Q20. Did you have enough information about current/ future events such as Chester music festival?

- Not enough
1
- Sufficient
2
- Too Much
3

Q21. Whilst on the tour did you prefer to read information; -

- a. On boards
- b. Leaflets

Q22. How would you describe the servery area?

- Poor
1
- Average
2
- Good
3
- Excellent
4

What word/s would you use to describe your first impression of the Refectory?

.....

Q23. How would you rate the variety of food?

- Poor
1
- Average
2
- Good
3
- Excellent
4

Q24. How would you rate the quality of service?

- Poor
1
- Average
2
- Good
3
- Excellent
4

Q25. How would you rate the Refectory for value for money?

- Poor
1
- Average
2
- Good
3
- Excellent
4

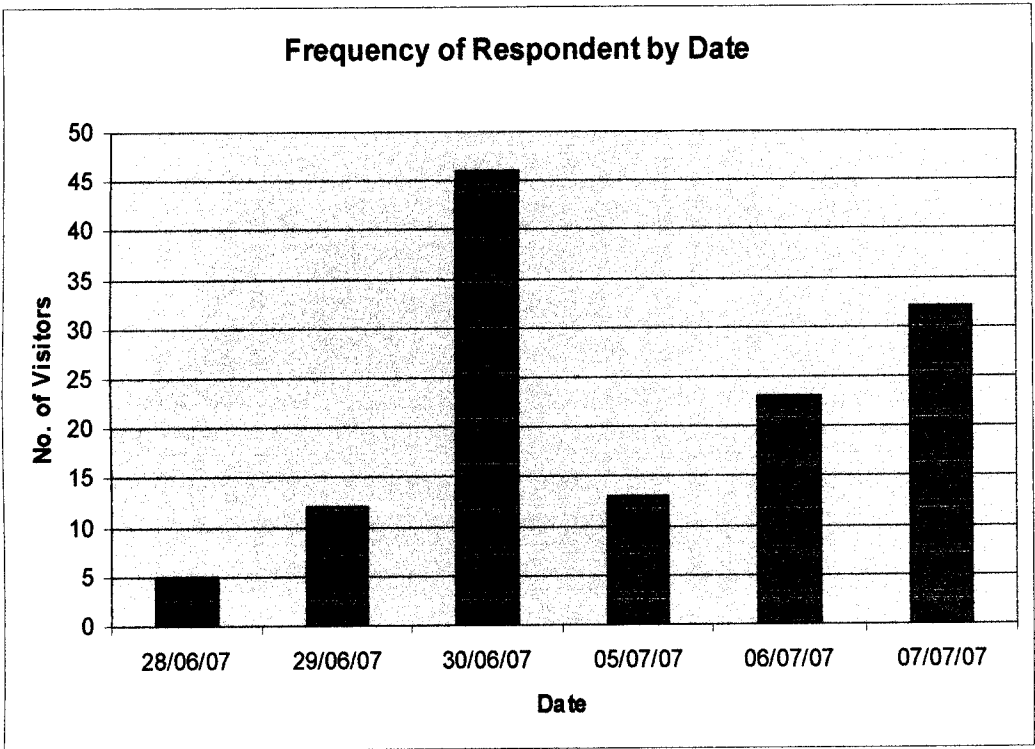
Q26. Would you expect to find hot food served for a wider range of time, currently it is served 11.45am- 2pm Mon-sat?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If yes, what time.....

Appendix F1

Frequency of Respondent by Date

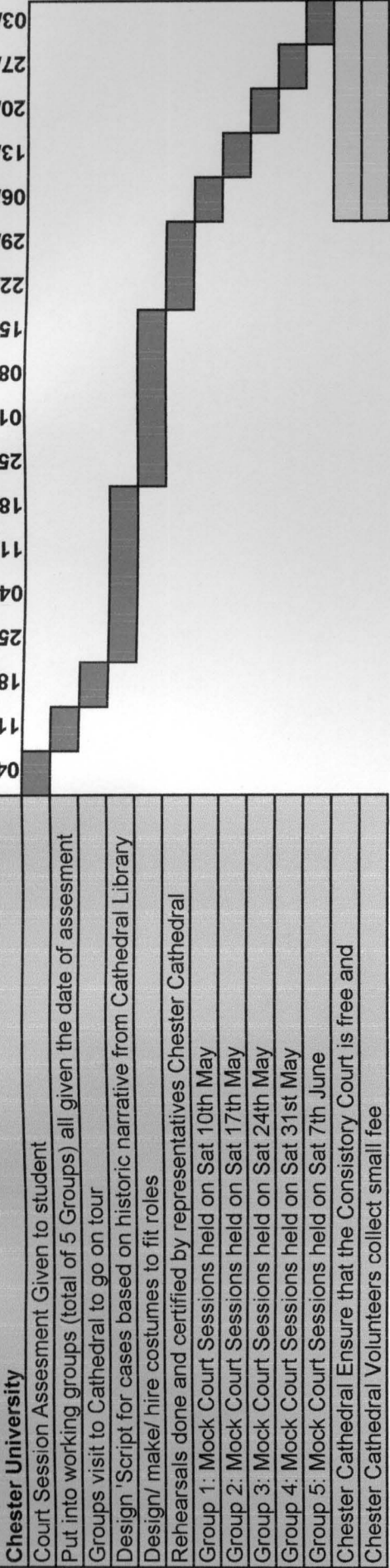


Appendix G1

Categorisation	A	B	C	D	E & F
1. Visitor Experience/ Visitor Profile/ Visitor Satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve visitor experience to raise profile within Chester. • Aimed to be Key attraction in the visitor economy. • Understand why visitors come to the Cathedral. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify key facets that improve visitor experience. • The 'atmosphere' is fundamental in achieving visitor satisfaction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do visitors come to the Cathedral. • Purpose of visit, segmenting the market. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Cathedral aims to balance between informative and gives visitors a nice day out. • The type of visitor is very important on marketing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (F) Heritage attraction must fit customer profile 100%. • The heritage attraction context experience must be relevant to the tour.
2. Visitor Experience/ Tour/ Added value feature/ USP (unique selling points) and 'Wow Factor'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USP the most complete set of monastic buildings in the country. • Once visitors are inside the 'wow factor' sells itself. • Clear historic timeline within the Cathedral. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Viewpoint that both visitor activity and Cathedral activities add to the overall 'atmosphere' i.e. Choir practising • Attempting to create something difference to that trip i.e. variety. • The content and delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The welcome has significant impact, first impression. • Unique experience(s) for visitors drives retention and satisfaction cites the West Doors being opened on Easter Sunday. • Major Concert Hall accommodate major symphony orchestras need to tailor that into Tours. • Commercial potential. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitors mat visit many Cathedral's comes down to USP • There so many within Chester Cathedral its more of a question what shouldn't be included during the tour. • There are 11 bespoke tours to fit various visitor needs. • Guideport system receives very positive feedback. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (E) Visitors are premium customers that have drinks in Chapter House with candles at night. • (E) Creates superb atmosphere, gives their customers that special treatment feel. • (E) Cathedral provide the premium experience very well • (E) Not too busy unlike York Minister
3. Visitor Experience/ Tour/ Limitations and issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notion of what the Cathedral means needs to be developed. • Lack of interaction arises from headset tour, affects the atmosphere. • Access and signage issues affect visitors around tour, directional. Affects visitor flow. • Perhaps too many tours available. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The signage is an issue, but at what point does that affect the atmosphere of the building. • The delivery of tour is key, visitor information. The guideports, undecided whether it is positive and affects the atmosphere. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Welcome is fundamental to visitor experience, first impression to the whole experience and ambience. Needs addressing as volunteers are inconsistent. • Guideport does not measure up to competition, directional problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing expectations of the visitors come for an entertaining day when visit the Cathedral, includes other facilities. • Cites not too long ago required architectural history degree to follow; scholarly. • Good experience although signage issue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (E) As an external customer noted very few issues; good access, city centre location. • Only thing mentioned an accompanying leaflet to take away let the visitors reflect on trip. • (F) Guideport not the best for elderly.

Appendix G1

Categorisation	A	B	C	D	E & F
4. Context/ Core-Purpose/ Religious Activities/ Cathedral Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Religious and spiritual aspects of activity remain core purpose. What does the Cathedral mean? More than Ancient Monument. Complex rganisationl tructure: essentially need to generate sufficient funds to run Cathedral. Much focus as a place of community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Core-purpose religious activities and spiritual aspect. Historic and Memorial linked to the past and the present community. Changing structurally although complex structure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Religious and spiritual aspect, main reason they are there and most important. Strategic move to build new structure where core-purpose brings 'four pillars' as cohesive unit. Raising the profile within the local community, much more than religious site. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stick to primary purpose; don't get diverted down other paths. Loose site of religious/ spiritual and heritage become another Alton Towers. Heritage industry affects core-purpose contentious issue surrounding pricing. Still being used for original purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (E) Yes it has to have tourists but it still remains a church, a place of worship. (F) A real spiritual feeling.
5. Context/ Core-purpose& Atmosphere/ Balancing commercial activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Range of products support core-purpose e.g. books or confirmation products. Being commercially active in sacred space raises tensions. Aesthetic value of the Cathedral, medieval infrastructure adds to tourism offer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Atmosphere is fundamental in commercial activities. Require synergistic balance between factors. Adds variety to the trip the correct balance leads to competitive edge. Strategies/ Processes welcomers require right balance removal barriers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires balance but commercial does not support core-purpose enough. Brand image requires work should be built around the unique atmosphere & ambience and USP of visitor experience. Supporting activities like the Refectory play important role. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other perspective core-purpose of tourist is a educational/entertainment trip. On the other hand religious visitors don't like facets of vis exp i.e. paying. Signage an issue but how much affects the atmosphere. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (E) Offer Premium tours, therefore the attractions must be of premium quality. The atmosphere and USP at Cathedral ensure standards are met. See above 3E.



Costings Estimated

Assessment Duration if sell out all 6 performances

Total number of visitor per day x Price 120x £1= £120

Total Revenue

Total Assessments x Daily Revenue 5x£120=£600

Total Costs (estimated)

Total Group Costume Costx Total No. Groups £50x 5= £250
Volunteers take admission charge

Total Profit

Total Revenue- Total Cost 600-250= £350

£350 to be donated to the Cathedral.